MY OWN STORY

Miss Johnson

With Mrs Beeby's

kind love.

Sept. 1st to 30th 1846.

FRONTISPIECE.

MY OWN STORY.

Auto-biography of a Child.

BY MARY HOWITT.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THOMAS TEGG, CHEAPSIDE.

MY OWN STORY;

OR,

The Autobiography of a Child.

BY MARY HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "STRIVE AND THRIVE," "SOWING AND REAPING,"
"WORK AND WAGES," ETC., ETC.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THOMAS TEGG, 73, CHEAPSIDE.

MDCCCXLV.

LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

This volume completes this series of Tales for the People and their Children. It is a work which has grown in interest as it has proceeded, and I now see my task completed almost with regret. The scope which it embraces is a wide one, and the farther I have gone, the more it has opened before me ; the lessons of human life and experience are inexhaustible, and hence it is my intention to continue this class of stories at some future time.

It is but justice to say, that of the thirteen stories of which this series is composed, two were written by my husband at a time when I was otherwise unavoidably occupied ; nor must I take my leave of the work without expressing my deep gratitude to the excellent projector and publisher of it for his handsome and friendly behaviour throughout this, our literary connection, and still more for his kindness and thoughtful consideration at a time of severe domestic affliction.

To the public, both at home and in America, who have received these books with distinguished favour, I now, as far as regards this series, bid adieu.

Clapton, Aug. 30th, 1844.

CONTENTS.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

CHAPTER I.

OUR HOME.

It has often been a subject of regret that so little is known of the workings of a child's mind during its earlier years. Little of this, however, can be known, excepting in cases of great precocity in children; and then the case is not an ordinary one, for children do not reason at all; they only receive impressions. They feel things keenly, kindness or unkindness, joy or sorrow—but they neither reason nor reflect—the reason and the reflection come later, and then we draw inferences, and understand the connection of one thing with another. We stand then, as it were, at the proper distance to take in a general view; we stand like the traveller on the hill-top, and look over the landscape which we have left behind us. We see there, in a clear perspective, the house in which we were born; the trees around it, or the neighbours' houses; we see here sunshine, there shade; there the hill of difficult ascent, which was

painful to our feet, and there the green and sunny valleys where we wandered with the companions of our joy, and gathered the gay flowers of every season.

I stand now on this hill-top, and look back over a scene which extends through the present century. The scene widens on every hand, and has broader lights and shades, and more important action as it nears the present time, but with it in its breadth and extent we have nothing to do. We look into ten years only, and that time lies in a pleasant valley, which will tire the foot of no youthful wanderer; nothing lies there but what is amusing and pleasant, children and childish sports—and thither let us betake ourselves, you, my young readers, and myself, and see what we can find there.

I must, in the first place, introduce you to the home where we lived. I say *we*, not in any editorial capacity, or because it sounds better, but because, when I write of myself as a child, I must write of my sister also. My sister was a year older than myself, but we were so constantly together, and were so guided by a constant amity of will, that we were something like one soul in two bodies. People imagined that we were twins, perhaps, because we were nearly the same height, or, perhaps, because we were always together, and always dressed alike. My sister was Anna, I myself, Mary.

Anna was somewhat slenderer than myself, with an oval countenance, soft blue eyes, soft brown hair, a remarkably rosy complexion, and an expression of great sweetness in her whole countenance. She was, in fact, the most amiable, the most feminine and

affectionate creature I ever saw. I, for I remember well what was said of me, if I do not remember my own person, was broader set than my sister, with a round face, large grey eyes, and a deal of healthful colour on my cheeks, with a roguish, merry expression of countenance, which made people think that I was very fond of mischief. I was not particularly so, but that was the general opinion, and I heard it so often said, that I set it down in my own mind for fact.

Our home was one of great comfort, though it was old-fashioned, with low rooms and small windows. A court separated it from the street, and its principal sitting-rooms opened into a pleasant and rather large garden, which sloped down behind it to a green, pleasant meadow, where ran a quick and clear brook. Beyond this meadow, fields, which had formerly belonged to our grandfather, stretched upwards for half a mile into a pleasant region of pastoral farms and cornfields, which, if pursued for a few miles, led to the classical world of Bagot's Park and Needwood Forest, and thus the landmarks of the horizon were, here and there, a conspicuous group of trees, a large barn, or farm-house. It was by no means a grand view, but it was one of great quietness and rural beauty. Our father was extremely fond of it, and pointed out its peculiar features with great pride to his visitors. I remember once his chagrin and almost anger, when, on having particularised the beauties of this familiar scene to a rich and worldly and not over-polite visitor, she remarked arrogantly, "You think it pleasant, no doubt—but, from my drawing-room windows, I look over an extent of fifty miles, right to the sea."

I was but a child: I understood the spirit of the speech, however, as well as my father, and I was angry, but neither he nor I thought at all the worse of our homely little view.

Our parents saw but little company; they were extremely attached to each other, and were very domestic people. He was engaged very much in his profession, as well as by some iron-works in Gloucestershire.

There was a front parlour in our house, which, in the earlier days of our childhood, was occupied by our grandfather, a stern, grave, and, according to his notions, a very religious old gentleman. He read a great deal, wrote a great deal, and was a great collector of herbs, which he dried and ground into snuff of various kinds, which he considered beneficial for curing all sorts of complaints. He had a small medical library, and prescribed to any one who would be his patient; he gave advice gratis in two ways, for he was one of those good people who think it their duty to be continually dropping words in season and out of season; hence he always was meddling with people's affairs, and, poor man, often brought himself into no little trouble by so doing.

We were rather afraid of our grandfather, and very carefully avoided making any noise at his end of the house, for of all things he detested the noise of children, and, besides this, poor old gentleman, he had a natural irritability of temper, which, having once or twice startled us by its unexpected vehemence, left us ever after a little in fear.

Our house, like all old-fashioned houses, had no regularity in its floors; we went down a step into

one room, and up a step into another. The rooms were low and rather dark, and were papered with dingy, old, large-patterned papers, which made them look lower and less than they were. There were plenty of rooms in the house, most of them well carpeted and well furnished; but others there were with blocked-up windows, for this was in the time of the heavily-laid-on window tax, and people, for economy's sake, managed with as little light as possible; and these mysterious dark rooms had in them nothing but lumber or a couple of chairs, turned one upon another, and a bedstead without hangings, which looked dismal and skeletonlike. These rooms, from which cobwebs were always fetched if anybody had cut themselves severely, and the blood would not stanch, had always in them a certain horror to my mind, and the established threat of putting any naughty children into the lumber-room, or the dark garret, never failed to produce a very subduing, if not a very salutary, effect.

The back of the house stood raised above the garden, into which a flight of steps led from an old-fashioned porch, abundantly covered with pyracantha and jasmine. Below the pleasant sitting-rooms on this side of the house lay the lower offices and cellars. The cellars were dark and dismal places, at least so they seemed to us children, and in them were found little yellowish lizards, called by Nanny, of whom I shall hereafter have much to say, "askars," and toads and frogs. We had been threatened with confinement in these cellars if we ever should be *very naughty;* and in the earlier years of my childhood, a story being told of a cruel father who had kept

his unhappy child for years in a cellar, this and the threat together made the cellars awful places, into which we only now and then ventured to peep under the heavy wooden shutter, which excluded the light, by raising it an inch or two, which was all that the chain which secured it inside would admit of.

Spite of these terrors, however, and of our grandfather, who lived on the other side of the house, we contrived to have a deal of pleasure. There was a row of fir-trees down one side of the garden, and a shrubbery under it, where we could play, as in a solitary world of our own, and where nobody could see us from the house. In those distant years I remember but very little bad weather, and the summers were as long as three summers now-a-days—snow, to be sure, there was in winter, and very beautiful it looked, like a white garment upon the hilly fields, and hanging feathery upon every twig of the garden trees; but I remember no wet, miserable, chilly days, when it was comfortless both within doors and without—oh no! in the golden years of a happy, active childhood, such days as these come not.

In summer there were plenty of flowers in the garden, and I never saw anywhere such tufts of yellow and purple crocuses and white snowdrops as we had; the lilacs seemed quite bowed down with flowers, and so did the laburnums—but we had no guilder-roses, or snow-balls, as they were then called. We had not a single one in the garden, but when they were in flower, we never failed to go to a relation of ours in the town, who had a tree in her garden, that we might see how beautiful it was. I

wonder that our mother, who enjoyed the garden so much, never introduced into it this tree, which is so easy to rear; but she never did—nor is there to this day such a tree in the garden, and every spring we children went to see and admire our Aunt Summerfield's snow-ball tree, and to come home laden with boughs of its pendant flowers.

Next door to us, on the right, lived Miss Wheldon and her widowed sister, Mrs. Gilbert, who had one son, a fine young man. The two families were neighbourly, but not intimate; they spoke when they met, but did not visit; but we had always heard our parents speak with so much respect of their neighbours, that we adopted the sentiment of the house, and always regarded them as people worthy of consideration. We watched them go in and out, and saw them walking in their garden, which adjoined ours, and said, "There goes Miss Patty," or "There go Mrs. Gilbert and her son," in a tone anything but indifferent. At length, one fine summer's afternoon, came the sudden, strange news, that young Mr. Gilbert was drowned—he had been bathing in the river Dove, that lovely river! and there he had lost his young life, and his poor mother was heart-broken, and how could she help it? All at once it seemed as if we had known and loved our neighbours all our days; our mother went in with offers of the most friendly service—we children peeped into the garden, where nobody was walking, and felt very sorry. A day or two afterwards my sister Anna saw poor Mrs. Gilbert walking up and down the garden, with her handkerchief to her eyes; she watched her go up and down with slow steps, and the

longer she watched the more vivid became her sympathy. "What can I do for her?" thought she—when suddenly an idea occurred. Her greatest treasures were a set of little play-tea-things which our mother had brought her the week before out of the Staffordshire Potteries—she would give her these. Accordingly she ran into the house, and fetched them thence, and, with these jingling in her pinafore, she crept through a thin place in the garden fence, which she never had thought of doing before; she stood before the poor lady, and, with tears in her eyes, said, opening her pinafore, "Do not cry so, Mrs. Gilbert, and I will give you these. I am so sorry for you, and will give you all my doll's tea-things!"

"Bless you!" said the heart-broken mother, and took her in her arms, and kissed her. She did not accept the tea-things, but she accepted the love that made the offer. The child's pity, she told our mother, did her good, and from that time we were intimate neighbours. Anna's passion was flowers. Mrs. Gilbert had the most beautiful tulips that ever grew; the tulip-bed came down to the hole in the hedge through which she had crept, and ever after, when they were in bloom, good Mrs. Gilbert never saw her in the garden without putting through the hedge tulips and other flowers for her acceptance; she was a kind neighbour, and used to give us not only flowers, but gingerbread and seed-cake also.

I remember well the day on which young Mr. Gilbert was buried; it was a bright sunshiny day, like that on which he was drowned, and it seemed to

me only the more solemnly impressive—death and summer-sunshine are incongruous to the heart of childhood.

Such were our neighbours to the right; on the left of us stood a handsome house, which belonged to, and was inhabited by, a Mrs. Carpenter, the widow of a considerable builder in the place. She was a very proud and stately lady, and had, it was said, great connections in London. Before she married Mr. Carpenter she was the widow of an officer in the East India service; she had been abroad, and had much property. There was, according to our childish notions, something quite grand about her house; it was tall and handsome, with lofty windows, and a large door, and a vast many offices about it, which, however, were, in her days, rather old and tumble-down. But the lady lived in the great house, and we used to see her driving out in her heavy, lumbering coach, or else walking with a very dignified air in her large, handsome garden, which adjoined ours, with a huge black calash on her head, and clogs on her feet. She was very particular in many ways; her dining-room lay to the street, and the children of Clowes, the auctioneer, used now and then to peep in to see the great lady at dinner. One day she had a party, and Grace Clowes, then about six years old, a thin, brown girl, with brown eyes and long, lanky hair, peeped in to see how all was going on. Mrs. Carpenter, observing this, ordered a servant, as soon as the little girl was gone, to go to the next house, and bid Miss Grace come to her. The servant did so, and Grace, with her wild hair smoothed, and with her yet wilder heart beating with expectation,

was conducted into the grand dining-room, where the great lady was seated with her guests.

"Now, Miss Grace," said Mrs. Carpenter to the child, who was left by the servant standing foolishly in the middle of the room, "look about you—here we all are—and here is the dinner; notice everything; and when you have satisfied your curiosity, you can go! But never let me catch you peeping in at my windows again!"

This story, which was told through the whole town, gave us an awful idea of the lady who would not be peeped at. Another thing, of a more personal nature, occurred to excite a little animosity in the bosom of our family towards her. We, like all country folks in those days, washed at home, and of course every five or six weeks our garden was full of very good clothes to be dried. One day the servant came rushing into the parlour, where we were sitting with our mother, exclaiming—

"Only think, ma'am, Mrs. Carpenter has sent to desire you will take in all your clothes, every rag of them, because she is going to have company, and it will never do for her company to see clothes hanging out to dry."

It was an unheard-of thing! Desire us to take in our clothes because she has company! "Give my compliments to her," said our mother, "and desire her never to invite company on our washing-day."

Our mother did not mean this message actually to go, but for all that it went.

Old Captain Buckstone, a neighbour, called at our house that same day, and our mother related to him the affront which Mrs. Carpenter had put on our

clothes. "The upstart!" exclaimed the Captain; "and I have seen her on the top of a baggage-wagon!"

This somewhat consoled our mother, but she did not easily get over the affront, nor, though in the most neighbourly spirit she had all the things taken in towards evening, when the company came, did Mrs. Carpenter forget it either; from that day forth they were on cold terms.

When the weather was severe, we played in an upper room, which was partly in the roof, and with a very pretty little casement window which opened into Mrs. Gilbert's yard. The room was papered with a reddish paper, and had a white marble slab fixed on a bracket by the wall; this, and a chest, which held our playthings, and two little chairs, were all its furniture. The window-sill was our table, it projected very comfortably, and there we sat in the light on our little chairs. We were very fond of this room; it was called "the little red room," or "the children's room;" on one side of it was the nursery, and on the other the second-best chamber, which was not often used, so that there was but little danger of our disturbing anybody, and that, perhaps, was one reason why it suited us so well. There was but one disadvantage in this room, and that was, that just under the window there was a great crack, where the floor seemed to have shrunk from the skirting-board. We lost a great many things there, small pewter-plates and dishes, whole sets of doll's spoons and small knives and scissors, and occasionally our best silver thimbles, which useful implements of industry, being thus swallowed up, made our mother

always say that the floor really should be mended—it would not be much trouble; only the fitting in of a slip of wood, and it must be done. We wished it might, and thought of how, if the board were taken up, we might discover all our lost treasure, as well as unknown-of things besides, which other people had lost.—But the floor never was mended.

Our mother in the winter spun a great deal. It was not the custom for gentlewomen to spin in those midland parts of England at that time; spinning was a fashion which had gone out for a quarter of a century at least, but she was from South Wales, a woman of strong energetic character, who, adhering to good usage rather than fashion, had brought the wheel with her, and used it for some years after her marriage. She spun, therefore, every winter, many pounds of flax into beautifully fine yarn, which used to hang in hanks, as they were finished, at the top of the kitchen, among hams, salted beef, and dried herbs. I have now table-linen of her spinning, and most probably shall leave some of it to my own children. She was an excellent spinner, and it used to be the delight of us children to sit beside her, and lay by turns our heads upon her knee, which were thus, as we thought, agreeably rocked, or rather trotted, by the turning of the wheel, whilst she repeated to us long portions of Thomson's Seasons, of which she was extremely fond, Gray's Elegy, passages from Cowper, and other long poems, all of a meditative and serious character. I can recall now the sound of her voice, mingled with the busy humming of the wheel, and it seems delightful.

In the spring, when the spinning was done for the

year, there always came an annual pleasure, which gave us great delight. This was the going to the weaver, who lived about two miles off, to give orders for the weaving, and to choose the patterns for it. For this excursion some fine steady day in April or the beginning of May was chosen, when, as the country saying is, the crows had picked the dirt up. It was always talked of for a week or two beforehand, and brought with it great anticipations of pleasure. We mostly went in the afternoon; it was a pleasant walk, though it was along the turnpike road the whole way, but green flowery fields bordered each side; there were lambs in the fields, goslings and young ducklings on the village and farm-house ponds by the wayside; the willow-catkins were all out; the hedges were budding with their young green leaves, and our mother, whom we loved so well, and who yet so seldom took walks with us into the country, was with us now, and to us children, who lived so much at home, it was quite an adventure to go so far. I remember so well the hamlet, called Wills-Lock, through which we passed, with the plough projecting over its ale-house as a sign, and where, at the juncture of the Stafford and Lichfield roads, stood the pinfold, and, better than that, the saw-pit, where, if the men were not at work, the children always were playing. I remember the Low-fields Hall, where we never failed to wonder why a place that stood on a hill should be called *low*, nor to talk of the horrid deed which not so long before had been done there; when the groom, going into the stables, found the four fine coach-horses all with their throats cut. It was as dreadful as any murder,

and we looked with horror, yet not without a thrilling interest, that was not without its agreeable excitement, at the great stables adjoining the house where the deed was done.

On we went, and into the next valley, where lived old Master Pedley, the weaver. He was an old bachelor, and his sister, who was a widow, kept his house; they were most decent, comfortable people, who, possessing a homestead of their own and a little property, never knew the meaning of that awful word—poverty, and had, therefore, such cheerful countenances as did one good to look upon, and, besides which, we always seemed to be expected when we got there, which would not have been strange to us children, for children are not so easily surprised by such things as grown people, had not our mother called our attention to the fact.

"I've been a-looking for you!" said the old woman invariably, taking us through the little kitchen into the still less parlour, with its brick floor, and its pleasant window, that looked out into the pleasant crofts behind. And those crofts it was which had such a charm for us, for they were full of cowslips and wild daffodils; and whilst our mother rested and talked with the old people, and arranged about her weaving, we went into the crofts, and gathered our hands full of these lovely flowers. When we returned to the house, we always found the little round stand set out, and the bottle of cowslip-wine, and the seed-cake, and ginger-bread ready, "for," said the old woman, "I've been a-looking for you these two or three days!"

It was a charming thing, this going to Master Pedley's, and, perhaps, what made us think most of it was, that it only came once a-year. We gathered plenty of flowers there, for though we had cowslips nearer to us than this place, we had no daffodils, and they were flowers that seemed fit for a garden. Our father mostly came to meet us on our return home, and then our mother taking his arm, they two went on together, leaving us two happy creatures either to go on before or to come after hand in hand.

The maid who had the care of us then was a relation of the old weaver, and was called Betty. She was a childish, giddy sort of girl, and was no great favourite with us. Her father was a tailor in the town, and as it was the time when the French invasion was so much talked of, he, like all other tailors, was busily employed in making regimentals for the volunteers. Betty brought us home pieces of scarlet cloth, and we, warm in the general cause, dressed up a regiment of doll-volunteers. Had we been boys, we should, like the boys of the town, have acted the volunteers, and been drilled, and exercised, and marched about, as they were, to the sound of drum and fife. But we looked on at all this out of our nursery-window; it was something with which we *girls* had nothing to do actively. We had not one single boy acquaintance, for our parents, for reasons of their own, kept us very much secluded. Boys, I remember, seemed to me a wild kind of strange animal, with which it was hardly creditable, and by no means desirable, to have anything to do; and when a stranger once asked—"Have you any brothers?" one of us replied with great gravity, and

a sense of great propriety, "Oh no; our father and mother do not approve of boys."

The boys of the town, therefore, played at soldiers in the streets, and we and our maid Betty equipped a regiment of doll-volunteers.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST SCHOOL.

I HAVE said that we had no boy-acquaintance. I must go back a year or two from the time I last wrote of, and I shall then have to mention one. Whilst our grandfather was our inmate, in order that he might not be annoyed by us in any way, and partly, perhaps, at his suggestion, we were sent to a day-school.

This was kept by a Miss Goodwin, a fair, mild, lady-like person, such a one as might have taken to school-teaching from some reverse of fortune—a stranger would have said so instantly. Whenever I read now of the gentle lady who taught school in Crabbe's Tales of the Hall, I think of her. But she was a gentlewoman by nature, rather than by birth—one whose spirit was of pure gold. Our mother made acquaintance with her when we became her scholars, and was greatly attached to her during her short life. She lived in a small house near to us, and her sister, Teresa, or Terry, as she was called, who was a little old-looking woman, and who always seemed to us somewhat half-witted, kept house for them. She lived in the kitchen, through which we passed to

the parlour, which was the school-room, and with her old-fashioned "flowered" gown pinned up around her, seemed always to be dusting and polishing the dark oak furniture.

We soon became very fond of Miss Goodwin, and she seemed equally so of us. We were certainly her privileged scholars, and cut paper and amused ourselves in a thousand unscholastic ways during the five hours which we spent in school. Our grandfather used sometimes to fetch us home, but this, for two reasons, we did not greatly like; in the first place, he always sat and talked so long with Miss Goodwin and Terry after school, which we thought tiresome; and secondly, because, when in a very good humour, he would carry one or other of us, and this was ten times worse than walking, because, dear old man, as he stooped forward very much, we always felt as if we should fall out of his arms—but this, of course, we never told him.

Miss Goodwin took tea with our mother now and then; she used to come dressed in muslin gowns, either white, or printed in such delicate patterns as to look almost white; my mother often took tea in the garden when she came, because she was so fond of fresh air, and with her daily confinement in the school, and her delicate health, she could enjoy but very little of it. The family was a consumptive one, and though we did not know what it meant when we heard our mother say so, we soon gleaned up the meaning of the fear which she often expressed, that poor Miss Goodwin would follow her sister, who had died. Her sister had married a well-to-do blacksmith in the place, named Steele, and after a year or

two had died, leaving one child, a son. Sammy Steele, this boy, was anything but a consumptive-looking subject. We had glimpses of him now and then in the kitchen, with his Aunt Terry; to us he belonged to the race of boys, and was therefore a creature to be shunned. He was a strong-limbed, big boy of his age, and we had always an aversion to him.

Miss Goodwin also had a brother in London, who was married and settled there, and a sister, who was a housekceper in the great mansion of some great millionaire in the metropolis also, and who now and then, when the family was in the country, came down to see her sisters. She was a handsome, portly woman, with an air of life about her; "she knew," as the simple townsfolks said, "what was what," and was altogether a person of consequence, although she bore the simple country name of Dolly.

Once, in the Christmas holidays, Miss Goodwin came to our house, to ask if we might go early that afternoon to play with her brother's son, "little Johnny," whom her sister Dolly had brought with her from London, for change of air. "Poor Johnny," she said, "was a very delicate boy, he was very still and good, and they all feared he would go off in a waste. Johnny was as gentle as a girl," she said, "and she hoped our parents would let us go."

We went, and there was Johnny. I remember well, child as I was, the shock that went through me as I saw him first. I do not think that I had perhaps ever seen a child out of health before; he was thin; his dark jacket and trousers hung quite loose upon him; he was as white as his shirt-collar,

and his eyes were hollow and mournful. We were filled with the kindest compassion; we took his thin hands in ours, and looked at his long thin fingers, till our eyes filled with tears. No, indeed! there was no danger of such a dear child as this doing us any harm! Poor Johnny! poor little Johnny Goodwin! We both sighed, and began to think what we should do to amuse him, when in came rushing Sammy Steele, the blacksmith's son, full of rude health, and almost bursting out of his coarse clothes. We were shocked, but we could not get away. We drew up close to one another, and stood in dignified silence. But our dignity mattered nothing to Sammy Steele; he was overflowing with good humour and energy; he was bent upon amusing us all. He had made a sort of oven—his aunt had given him leave to bring it in, and here it was. He set it on one side of the fire, and poked the hot cinders under it, and puffed and blew till he was as hot as any Vulcan, old or young, and presently the little oven was getting hot. His aunt Terry had mixed some tea-cakes, and they were to be baked in his oven; and more than that, he had himself made a little bakestone, or "bakston" as he called it, and his aunt Terry had mixed some batter, and he himself was going to make some pikelets for our tea. Never was there such a busy, good-natured fellow. Poor Johnny's pale face kindled up; he took the greatest interest in the oven; it baked the most charming little tea-cakes. Miss Goodwin set out little tiny china tea-things on a tray, and one of us made tea, whilst the other buttered the cakes and the smoking hot pikelets which Sammy Steele turned on and

turned off his bakestone, with the most perfect skill, never thinking—not he—about himself, but saying that he had plenty yet to bake—plenty! we must eat more; we could not half have done; he never saw folks with such little appetites in all his life. After we had satisfied ourselves, his turn came. His aunt Terry had allowed him a certain quantity of lard to grease his bakestone with, and all this he had exhausted over us—there was not a bit more in the house. What was to be done? But it was easy enough for Sammy Steele to know what must be done, for he was a boy with resources. He took the candle out of the stick, and greased the stone. In vain we exclaimed in horror; it mattered nothing; he was not over delicate, and he declared his pikelet to be excellent.

Oh he was a rare fellow, that blacksmith's son! We could not tell which we liked best, Sammy Steele, with his hot, red face, and large brown hands, or Johnny Goodwin, who looked so gentle and so ill.

We went home delighted. Sammy Steele, however, never came to our house, though his cousin did. He walked up and down our garden, leaning on his aunt's arm, but it was winter time, and he could come only seldom. He became so ill, too, that his aunts became seriously anxious on his account. Mrs. Dolly shortened her visit and took him home, and in the spring he died. His death was quite a grief to us. We cried sadly, and our mother consoled us by saying that Johnny Goodwin was surely gone to heaven, for there were not many such boys as he.

CHAPTER III.

CHANGES. THE NEW MAID.

About this time two changes occurred. In the first place our grandfather left us. He took lodgings at a pleasant house belonging to an old gardener and his wife, where there were no children, at about a mile's distance from us, and just out of the other side of the town. Here he had a couple of rooms, and lived very much to his heart's content. Here he heated his room with a chafing-dish and charcoal, and set up his crucible, and dried his herbs, and pounded and dispensed his snuff, without any interruption. Here, also, he could receive his patients of all kinds, and practise the use of his metallic tracters, which were at that time the rage, and in the use of which he was an adept, on all kind of poor, infirm and afflicted creatures who came to him. He was a great deal more at his ease after this removal, and so were we. Once a week we children were sent up with our maid to visit him, and to take some kind message or little present to him from our parents, and every Sunday he dined with us. We were very fond of visiting the old gentleman in this way, for several reasons. In the first place, we liked the walk, which to us, secluded children as we were, had something quite adventurous in it; we learned to know the town in this way, and it had much such a charm for us as the reading of a new book.

There were several ways of reaching the Heath, as that part of the neighbourhood was called where our

grandfather lived; and we were extremely fond of varying them. Sometimes we went through the market-place and up the High-street; and amused ourselves with town-life the whole way. Sometimes we went round through the church-yard, which in those days was always kept unlocked and open to the public, as all country church-yards ought to be, and thus leaving the town entirely, and, going far to the right, threaded pleasant alleys that led between the bowery gardens of large houses, to which we occasionally went with our mother to make morning calls. On this side there were extensive views into Derbyshire and the north of Staffordshire among the hills, whence in somewhat later years were seen the white turrets of Alton Towers; from this side too were distinctly seen the ruins of Tutbury Castle, an object of interest to us at all times. There was a third way, too, and yet a fourth, and both of these had something quite terrific to our imaginations. The one led us past the great wooden barn where a certain Betty Ball had hung herself, and which therefore was said to be haunted; and further on to the three lane-ends, where an unfortunate girl who had committed suicide was buried, according to the brutal usage of those days, with a stake run through her body, as if she had not suffered anguish enough in her life, without her miserable remains enduring the cruellest outrage in death. The other road led through the back lanes of the town, where we had not the permission of our parents to go; but where, I am ashamed to acknowledge, we sometimes went unpermitted. In one of these lanes lived the beggars, the rag-gatherers, the chimney-sweepers, and bone-dealers. Asses were

kept in the lower rooms, and house-doors were fastened with padlocks. The men had a reckless, lawless, swaggering air about them; they were bronzed with wind and weather, and had the look of dwellers out of doors; they wore ragged and greasy clothes, and had their hats either slouched over their eyes, or else knowingly set on one side of their heads; and the women were some of them wretched-looking hags, or flaunting "young queans," with black ringlets and long dangling earrings. But I am not purposing at this moment to describe the town or its inhabitants; my business is now with our grandfather and our visits to him.

The old gentleman gave us almonds and raisins when we came, and sometimes a new book. The books which we had then were very different to those which children have now-a-days. They were externally mostly square, and bound, many of them, in beautiful paper, stamped and printed in green and gold, and red and lilac. I wonder one never sees such paper now;—beautiful books they were to look at on the outside; but alas!—I grieve to say it—they were very dry within. At that time the Taylor's charming Original Poems, and more charming Nursery Rhymes, were not written—nor had any of Maria Edgeworth's earlier ones penetrated into our out-of-the-world region. Our books bore such titles as The Castle of Instruction, The Hill of Learning, The Rational Dame, and so on; and seemed written on purpose to deter children from reading; however, we were thankful to our grandfather for whatever he gave us. We walked about the pleasant, sloping, and sunny garden of the house where he lived, and round and

round the croft at the back of the house, where the sweetest white and blue violets grew on the banks in spring. Our mother's favourite flowers were violets; essence of violet was the only perfume she used, and all that belonged to her had the peculiar odour of that flower; the very tradespeople used to say that the bank-bills that came from her smelled so sweet that they could distinguish them from anybody else's. From the delight which violets gave to her, and the pleasure which we always had in gathering them for her, I have even now, and always shall have, a peculiar feeling towards them;—they bring back the child's sentiment of affection to a good mother,—a holy and a pleasant sentiment.

About the time when our grandfather left us, we parted also with our maid Betty, and the immediate reason of her going was this:—Our parents went during the winter from home, on a short visit into Cheshire; and, either by permission or otherwise, the servants of the family were out too for one night. I cannot tell how it happened to be so; but I well remember Betty being alone with us in the house in the evening, and because the nursery seemed a long way off, we all three sat together by the kitchen fire long after our usual bed-time. We had a kitten that was poorly, and Betty sat by the fire on a low stool and fed it with a tea-spoon, and one of us held the tea-cup of milk and the other the kitchen-candle; Betty said the kitten would die, and we cried. An eirie sort of feeling crept over us; the kitchen looked dim and ghastly, lighted by its one thin candle; we thought of all the rooms in the house where there was nobody, where all was darkness and silence; we

thought of lumber-rooms where spiders spun their cloudy webs, and of the cellars where were the crawling things; we thought, and were terrified almost out of our wits. When the imagination is excited either in old or young, they begin to tell dismal stories. Accordingly Betty began to tell of a dreadful thing which had just occurred up in the moorlands of Staffordshire: a little child had been devoured by a hungry pig; and then of something even worse than that a thousand times,—of a little child in that same wild part of the country which had been killed by a cruel female relation, to whose care it had been committed, and baked in an oven; a neighbour had come in, and perceiving a strange smell, asked what it was, and suspecting the fact, had then gone out and raised the neighbourhood, when the wicked wretch, who was busy at the wash-tub, was secured, and the poor child's body found baking in what was then called a stein-pot. It was a horrid story; we fairly screamed for terror; we knew not what to do; Betty was as much terrified as we; the kitten fell into a sort of convulsion, and struggled as if in pain; Betty said it would be a mercy to put it out of its misery, but to us it seemed like the woman murdering the child. Just then, the clock struck—it was twelve! it was midnight! We had never been up so late before in all our lives; we dared not go to bed, nor dared she. At length she proposed that, late as it was, we should all go up together to her father's, the tailor's, knock them up, and bring her brother down to sleep in the house. No sooner said than done; she muffled us up in our little coats, put on her cloak, and we sallied forth. It was pitch dark; there was not a lamp in the town; the sky was dark

and cloudy, and the wind blew fearfully. There was to us something awful beyond words in being thus abroad at the dead of night. The watchman stood by the pump muffled up to the ears in his cloak, with his lantern at his feet—asleep.

"Never mind him!" said Betty, and hurried us on.

Her father's was at the other end of the town; we knocked them up, to their great terror, and roused at the same time the whole neighbourhood; and after waiting what seemed to us an immense time, Joe, her tall brother, went home with us to sleep in the house. When we reached home, the kitten was dead —stiff, stretched out on the hearth; but Betty would not allow us time to mourn over it; she warmed what she called a "good jorum" of elder wine, of which she gave us to drink, and then put us to bed. I remember nothing more of that night; we must have slept very soundly and very late too, for when we woke next morning, all things were as usual in the house; the other servants were come home; the house seemed fully inhabited, and Betty was sitting by the nursery fire at her work. Whilst she dressed us she made us promise not to say one word to our parents, or anybody else, of the adventures of the night. To us they all seemed like a wild horrible dream, and we promised secrecy.

Our parents returned at the expected time; and we were asked—as we always were on such occasions —what we had done each day; fortunately nothing was said of the night, so we kept our secret. In the course of a few days, however, some sort of a strange report came to our mother's ears of "her dear children wandering up and down the streets after midnight

like forlorn creatures." She was horrified, as well she might be, and asked us so point blank as to the truth that we were obliged to confess all. Betty then came in for her share of wrath; she at first denied, and then finding that all was known, reproached us for want of faith. Our mother removed us from this scene of strife, and dismissed Betty instantly. We were not sorry when she went; for though she was not wilfully unkind to us in any way, she still exercised a very uncomfortable and unwholesome influence over us.

A new maid was now to be inquired for; and as our mother on consideration thought that Betty's faults arose from want of experience, she determined to have an older and graver person with us for the future. Many young women came after the place—for our service was in excellent repute—and we, who sat entirely with our mother, saw all who came, though we were invariably sent out of the room during the conversation which ensued. At length we were told that a person was engaged, and would come the next week. She came—a tall, gaunt, grave-looking woman of five-and-twenty, with something wild and picturesque in her appearance, a very abrupt, decided manner, and a speech singularly dialectical. We knew not what to think of her; all our mother's acquaintance were in the same predicament; but they received for answer that she came highly recommended as a most trustworthy, conscientious, and clever woman, and these were qualities which our mother valued more highly than mere polish of manner or exterior.

This remarkable person—who lived in our family

for fifteen years from this day, and only left us to go home and die—was called Nanny. Ann Woodings was her name; but Nanny she had always been called, and so she still chose to be called. She wore, when she came to the house, some kind of dark, sober-coloured dress, made very tight, in the style of those days, half high, with a prim linen habit-shirt under it with a little plaited frill, like that of a boy's shirt, round the neck, and a black neck-ribbon; a cap of white linen, made all in a piece, and called by her "a bag-cap," with a double frill round the face; a shortish, reddish-brown cloak, trimmed down the front and round the capacious hood with old narrow fur; and a little skimming-dish shaped green silk bonnet. Such an odd figure hardly ever was seen. Her features were large and unpleasing; her complexion muddy, and her hands and feet remarkably large.

Strange as this woman was in appearance, time soon proved to our mother that she was clever and trustworthy; conscientious, too, I ought perhaps also to add, but that was not exactly in the way our mother would have liked had she known all,—but of that anon; for the present we have nothing to do but with her outward management, and this indeed was clever. She was punctual, like the sun. We were in bed and out of bed at the exact moment; we were taken to school and brought back to the minute, without any oversight of our mother's; and then, after Miss Goodwin's death, when our mother undertook our education, nothing could be more satisfactory than all her preparation and management.

"She is a treasure!" said our mother to her friends; and they, hearing nothing but good of her,

and seeing our neat, healthful appearance, treated her also as a person to be respected.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TOWN.

Under the guidance of Nanny, our visits to our grandfather—go by whichever way we would—were infinitely more attractive than poor Betty ever could have made them.

Looking back from that hill-top of distance of which I have before spoken, I can now understand many things regarding Nanny, the effect of which as children we only *felt*. Nanny was really a singularly gifted woman, if not a woman of genius. She must have had remarkable powers of observation, a retentive memory, a turn for all that was picturesque and traditional, considerable superstition, and a remarkable faculty for relating anything clearly and effectively. She cast, as it were, a spell over us; we sat and listened for hours to her histories, which seemed never to come to an end; and there was something so appropriate—so racy and picturesque, in the old dialectic language which she used, that I never liked any story told in modern polite English half as well as hers; they seemed to me to want richness and picturesqueness. From this cause I trace, even now, my great love of dialect, and the singularly pleasing effect which it always produces on me when spoken.

Nanny was a good tactician, too; she did not launch out into all her broad singularities of character

at once—they stole upon us by degrees; and, indeed, had it not been so, our parents must have been startled, and assuredly would have dismissed her. Many of her peculiarities in fact they never did know, and we should as soon have thought of betraying ourselves as her; yet she never put us on our guard by enforcing secrecy; she seemed as bold and open as the day, and yet she was cunning and wary for all that. And though I speak now with the full knowledge of Nanny's character, it was only by slow degrees that she fully revealed herself to us; yet in the meantime she was making herself not only agreeable but necessary to us also.

Nothing in the world could be more charming than walks into the town with her. We knew the exterior of things before she came; but who, like her, could pull down with a touch, as it were, the front of every house, and give us a peep into the interior, however secret or strange? Who, like her, was full of anecdote about all the people we met, from the grandee of the town down to the buyer of hare-skins in Smithy-lane?

There, in that bowery-looking dwelling overgrown with rose and clematis, lived the lady who had loved a sea-captain, and fought by his side in man's attire, and saved his life at the expense of severe wounds on her own body. A fair and passionately-loving lady had she been in her youth; but for all that, she was a very virago in temper now; and Nanny had seen her box the ears of her second husband as resolutely as she had fought on behalf of her first lover.

There, in that gloomy house, lived the great army-contractor A——, whose slaughter of cattle for the

army was every week so immense, and who made purchases all over the country. Did we know that in an upper room of that house, the window of which, small and grated with iron, opened on the leads, had been kept for years, chained down to her bedstead, his unhappy wife. Wonderful were the stories which she told of this house—of the busy trading father, of the unfortunate wife, and the handsome young profligate son, who, like some character in one of Fielding's or Smollet's novels, went up and down the world breaking the hearts of, she knew not how many, young and handsome women.

Mrs. A—— was not, according to Nanny, the only mysterious captive kept in garrets and secret places of houses whose outsides looked smiling and cheerful, with pleasant gardens all around them. There was a doleful idiot in one house, the mistress of which came in silks and satins, with her lap-dog at her heels, to visit our own mother. And there were the two occasionally insane brothers, the S——s, army-contractors likewise, one of whom had been in the West Indies with a cargo of mules, and had gone mad there, and there had worn such fearful manacles on his legs that the marks of them remained to this day. These men were of gigantic size and with voices naturally powerful, which, when inflamed by madness, became fearfully terrific. It was with dread that we looked up to these houses, and listened if we might not hear awful sounds proceeding from them.

Nanny's stories were mostly of the wild and wonderful; but she now and then varied them by telling us of such dwellers in houses as the poor organist Green and his sick wife, whose little chamber was

made cheerful by the affection of her good husband, and by the balsams and sweet-smelling plants, verbenas and balm of Gilead, which she cultivated with a perfect passion. Then there were old women who lived in the alms-houses, whose histories were worth the telling. There was old Alice, or Ales Emery, as she was called, whose daughter was such a pattern of filial love, who took in needle-work, and died; but not before she had made a shroud for herself and another for her mother, which the old woman kept carefully laid in lavender in the bottom drawer of her chest, waiting for the time when it should be wanted.

Sometimes Nanny took us past the old Hall—the half-timbered, gloomy, desolate old hall; and then she perfectly revelled in its history. We knew the lady who lived there—Miss Grace Copestake; for she occasionally called on our mother, and was, in our eyes, a singular person, dressed as she was in yellow or some bright colour, and with a quick flighty sort of manner which had always struck us as peculiar. Our parents, when speaking of her, frequently called her "poor Miss Grace," but we never knew why till Nanny told us.

The father of Miss Grace had been a speculative man, and had introduced the lapidary business, on rather a great scale, into the town. He built extensive wooden shops all round the large court of his house, which was enclosed with a high, dreary-looking wall. She described the desolate, weed-grown court and the decaying shops as they now stood; for when it ceased to be the fashion for gentlemen to wear buckles set with stones, his business fell off, and he was a ruined man. He died; and Miss Grace

undertook the settling of his affairs: she sold all she could to pay his debts, and then was left with the bare walls of the desolate old house, for she was compelled to sell all the furniture excepting what was needed for the few rooms which she inhabited, and there she lived with an ancient man and his wife, her sole domestics. Poor Miss Grace became a little wrong in her head, either with care or sorrow; and it was enough to make her crazed to see the things which she saw night after night in that doleful old house. What, then, was the house haunted?—of a certainty; what old place like that was not haunted! There was the spectral lady who stole down the private staircase now and then, at uncertain periods, in stiff silks which rustled at every step. Mysterious hands there were which held a bloody bowl above a certain closet door, and which not only Miss Grace had seen, but a most excellent lady—a Mrs. Parker, who with her daughter had at one time taken a part of the house for a school; and in consequence of which and other such eirie visions had been obliged to leave. And not only she and Miss Grace had seen them, but several of "the lace-girls" also. These "lace-girls," as they were called, were young women employed by Miss Grace in working lace, which she received from the manufacturers in Nottingham, and employed girls to sprig and work in frames. She had fitted up an immense room in this dreary old mansion for this purpose. The lace was stretched in a sort of quilting-frame which was placed on tressels, and one or two girls worked at a piece. Whether Miss Grace did this for amusement or as a means of subsistence, I know not; but there the girls went daily, and,

according to common report, strange were the sights and sounds with which they became familiar.

One day Nanny obtained leave to take us to see some horse-riders and rope-dancers who were come to the town, and were exhibiting their wonderful feats in the ruinous court, among the decaying lapidary shops, which with their large, broken windows —where they were strong enough for the purpose— served as a sort of stand. Of the horse-riding feats I now remember much less than of the effect produced on my mind by that scene of desolation and decay, for the full effect of which Nanny had prepared our minds. When the performances were finished, we went to the hall itself, where Nanny—who was acquainted with the old domestic and his wife—obtained for us a view of the whole place. It was indeed a dreary, desolate spot; many of the walls had been hung with tapestry, and now stood in their naked brick and mortar, looking worse than the interior of an out-building. Handsome ceilings, cornices, and lofty windows, with carved wood-work about them, made the strangest contrast with the walls. The lady's own room was finished with dark, old oak wainscot; a few family pictures hung in it, and there she herself sat in her yellow gauze, like an old faded picture herself. As she was acquainted with our parents she received us most graciously, gave us little cakes to eat and each a glass of wine, made us tell her all about the horse-riders, and bade us come often to see her.

But we never went again till after Miss Grace's death, when our father purchased at the sale of the whole place the very oak wainscot of the room where

she then sat, and had it put up in a house of his own, where it remains dark and handsome as ever.

There was another house, too, which interested us greatly. It was a sort of old, low, red-brick mansion; and stood, half buried in trees and ivy, within an ancient wall, over and about which the ivy grew in heavy masses. There, as our father had often told us, the Duke of Cumberland had been entertained by the Gardiner family, to which it still belongs, when he spent a night in the town in his pursuit of the Scotch rebels, in 1745, and in fact on his way to Culloden; and where he received an entertainment so much to his mind that he conferred upon the town an exemption for ever from soldiers being quartered there. This our father had often told us, and also that the cook who had prepared the supper for the duke lived afterwards in my grandfather's family, where, if either master or mistress presumed to find fault with her cooking, she rose up in a towering passion, saying that she who had pleased the Duke of Cumberland never would be found fault with by man or woman, be they who they might.

But from Nanny came another story. There had lived here a lady wonderfully beautiful, who yet had some secret sorrow at her heart that neither her husband nor any friend of hers could fathom. She drove about in her carriage, the handsomest woman of the neighbourhood, but she never smiled nor willingly associated with any one.

One day, in her husband's absence, she told her maid that she was not well and would keep her bed, and was therefore left alone in her chamber. Towards noon, the report of a pistol in her room alarmed the

whole house; they rushed thither; the door was locked and all was silent within. The door was burst open, and the unhappy lady lay a horrible spectacle in her bed; she had shot herself as she lay there; but why, no one knew; the secret of her sorrow was buried with her.

Nanny spared no details in her stories; everything was told clearly and straightforward, and painted in strong colours. Whatever she told us she made us see and feel, and, as it were, become actors in. We never passed this house, therefore, without hearing in the sunny stillness of a summer's noon the sudden report of the pistol, and then seeing the bloody sheets and the awful corpse.

And then there was the principal inn which we passed. Had we never heard of the young and handsome lady who came there and died?

It was late one dark and stormy winter night; the ostler was just going to bed; the last brandy-and-water-drinking guest had left the fat, buxom landlady and the bar—when up drove, like fury, a post-chaise to the door, and pulled up suddenly; the door flew open, and, without waiting to have the steps let down, out sprang a gentleman of about eight-and-twenty, and, rushing into the house, demanded instant attention for a lady who was extremely ill. All was in motion in the inn in a second of time; for the landlady, who had a quick eye for such things, saw instantly that the gentleman, who was handsome and seemed to be in the utmost distress of mind, was rich also. The chambermaid ran up stairs with her keys, a waiter ran up after her with a shovel of live coals to make a quick fire, and the sick lady was supported

from the chaise, principally by the gentleman, and carried up stairs, where they found the fire burning and the bed ready to receive her.

She was a young creature of perhaps seventeen—the most magnificently beautiful creature that eyes were ever set upon. She seemed to be in the very languor of death. The gentleman knelt beside her; rubbed her hands and feet; spoke to her in a tone of the most agonized love, but in a foreign tongue, so that no one understood the words which he said. The doctor came, but gave no hope. The clergyman came early the next morning and administered the sacrament; but the lady spoke not one word. That evening she died. No words can describe the distress of the poor young gentleman: he never left the room where she lay; and never, night or day, took off his clothes during the time he stayed there.

He ordered the most costly grave-clothes for her, and the very best coffin that ever had been made. Nobody, however, knew who they were: the gentry of the town, full of sympathy and curiosity, made the most zealous offers of help; but he civilly rejected all. He saw no one but the undertaker and the clergyman; nor could the clergyman learn from him any particulars regarding them. All was mystery. He paid handsomely for all that he had in the inn or in the town, and this made everybody give him a good word.

She was buried late in the evening, just one week after they had arrived there; the gentleman being the only mourner; and in his heart—Nanny never failed to say—there was grief enough for a dozen funerals. He ordered a post-chaise to be ready at the door on

his return from the funeral, and into it he got, and fee'd the post-boy to drive as fast as his horses could go, to Lichfield; and that was the last that was known of him.

On the next Sunday, the clergyman preached a funeral sermon for the lady who had been cut down so young and beautiful, like a flower of the field. It was a very fine and touching sermon, and left not a dry eye in the church; and even to this day is handed about among the ladies of the town in manuscript. The clergyman received an order from the gentleman to place a plain but handsome stone over her grave, on which were to be simply carved the initials M. B. The stone was raised; all the town went to see it; but nothing could be made out from those two senseless letters.

Such were some of Nanny's stories, as we went through the town on our visits to our grandfather.

CHAPTER V.

NANNY AT HOME.

Nanny was, as I have said, a most interesting companion abroad; but she was not less so at home. How shall I ever describe the spell of enchantment which she threw over our nursery hearth! I should be the first of story-tellers if I had a power like that which she possessed.

She would sometimes be in a humour to talk about herself; and then she described her home, her youth, her many sisters, and her one brother, and her

parents, with such a life-like reality, that even now I remember all their names and all the particulars regarding them. She told us of the village where she lived, and of the families high and low who inhabited it;—Lawyer Robinson, and Parson Groves and his fair daughters, and the farmer's handsome sons—of the young Bartle Gough the village rake, and Hugo Alveston Chetwynd the gay village squire—and of Hannah Jackson, who died for love of a "false young man," named Charles Woolley.

Hannah Jackson was a village belle, and lived with her old grand-parents in a rural cottage that stood in a garden full of flowers. Hannah Jackson went duly to church every Sunday with a nosegay in her hand, and the old people went with her. She was the light of their eyes and the joy of their old hearts. All the young men of the neighbourhood courted her, but she only listened to one; and in return for his offered love she gave her whole heart. She was the dear friend of our Nanny; and our Nanny spoke of her with enthusiasm, as a very angel. Her lover was false to her; and poor Hannah drooped like a flower whose root has been cut off. She fell into what the country people call "a waste," and she sent over to pray that her friend Nanny would go and see her. Nanny went; they walked into the churchyard together, and Hannah chose the place where she would be buried. She then showed her friend a paper on which she had disposed of all her small worldly possessions—her best shawl and bonnet to one, her Prayer-book and Bible to another, to one her housewife, and to another her silver thimble—and to the old grand-parents her little earnings in

money. Nanny promised with tears to be a true executor; and so they parted, to see each other bodily on earth no more.

Nanny was in service in the town, and, according to her account, a few weeks after their parting, as she lay in bed awake in the early morning, while it was yet dark, she became conscious of a presence in the room. All was still as death, and the curtains of the bed slowly and silently parted; a pale light filled the opening, and there stood, as distinctly as if in life, the figure of that heart-broken maiden. She looked grave, but no longer sad; not a word was said, but their eyes met; they gazed for a moment at each other, and then the pale shadow slowly faded away, and all was darkness and vacancy in the chamber. Nanny described herself not as frightened, but as solemnly impressed, and she felt sure that this was a token of her death. She lay and listened; and presently the church clock struck four. Her friend then had died between this hour and the last; she could not sleep again, but lay and pondered on the strange occurrence. Two days afterwards, her father came with the farmer's wagon to the town, and brought news such as she expected. At half-past three o'clock on the morning of the apparition, Hannah Jackson had died.

Nanny had the firmest belief in a variety of supernatural appearances and agencies. She knew the house where a hobthrush had helped the farmer's family for many years, until—as is always the case—it was driven away by the offer of a suit of clothes. She knew haunted bridges and stiles. In one case which she described, a black dog kept ever sullen

watch there; in the other, a little old woman without a head sat spinning. Her own father's wagon had been tied so firmly to a rush that the team of six horses could not draw it thence. There were, she said, particular places where spirits of the earth, or fairies, or whatever you choose to call them, had supreme power; and such was this spot where the wagon was fixed. What was the spell which released the wagon I do not now remember, but it is no great loss; for as roads are in so much better condition now-a-days, imps of the road have far less power than formerly.

Nanny amused us over and over again by the story of herself and her sister Betty being sent by their mother to sell two couple of ducks at the Rugeley market. They had to pass through Armitage, along what she called the "cut-side," and of which she always spoke with horror. Canals were not very common in those days, or rather in that part of the country. The country people called them "cuts," and the people employed on the canals, and called by them "navigators," were held in great horror, and many terrible stories were told of their misdeeds by the "cut-side" in lonesome places, and that not alone at "dark hour," but in broad daylight.

Off, however, trudged the two little girls, each with a basket on her arm, each basket containing a couple of ducks. They had never been by that road, or so far alone before; and when they reached the "cut-side," every step filled them with direful apprehension. Tall reeds grew by the banks, and there were dark watery places, like sullen pools, where they could think of nothing but drowned men and

women. Here and there they came to thick plantations of fir and other trees, the fag-end or the very middle of some gentleman's place, where the threat of steel-traps terrified them, or the distant view of some gray solitary house suggested ideas of loneliness and terror. Now and then they met the awful "navigators,"—rough, huge men in ankle boots, tarry smock-frocks rolled up round their bodies, and red and blue worsted night-caps on their heads. These men's faces, she said, had a sunburnt, lawless expression; their hands were huge and horny with handling heavy ropes and hauling along heavy boats; they walked with a heavy rolling gait, and had not at all the look of honest men. The two little girls began to say their prayers the moment any of these forms came in view; their knees trembled and their teeth almost chattered in their heads. But no evil befell them; they reached Rugeley, and took their stand patiently beside the little old-fashioned wooden market-house there. Perhaps their ducks had nothing about them to attract purchasers, or perhaps they were slow to offer them; however that might be, other people's ducks were sold and theirs remained in their baskets. They were told by their mother that they were to get half-a-crown a couple, and by no means were they to bring them back; nobody, however, was inclined to give half-a-crown in exchange for their ducks. They grew tired and hungry, and sat down on the steps of the market-house to eat their bread and cheese; and then quenched their thirst from the little pump beside the market-house. Afternoon came, and people were beginning to go home; they waited till everybody

was gone, and then, hopeless and dispirited, set off back again.

Evening seemed to come on unusually early that day. The idea of the "cut-side" at dusk was horrible; they hastened onward as fast as they could; the ducks were heavy and they were tired; they seemed to make no way at all. At length they reached the canal; all was solitary, and the water looked dark and gloomy; owls and night-hawks flew about in the plantations, and cried dismally. The children said, almost with a groan, what *would* become of them if they should meet a navigator! and every turn of the bank was terrible in the dread of its revealing one in the distance. In the midst of these horrible apprehensions they heard sounds behind them, which made them look round—and there! oh fearful spectacle!—were two navigators on what she called a "shog-trot," keeping up the while a low talk.

"What will become of us?" ejaculated the awe-struck children. To put down the ducks and fly for their lives was the first, and perhaps most natural thought; but fear of their mother's displeasure prevented their acting upon it. They ran with all their might; the ducks fluttered about and quacked, and made a noise which would betray them to their pursuers. They were but a quarter of a mile now from the tunnel, that most awful place on the whole canal, into which they might be dragged and horribly murdered, and hidden for ever in darkness. They must make their escape now or never! The canal turned round a woody point, and here they hoped to hide themselves. When they rounded the point, a watery piece of ground, or rather a shallow pool,

overgrown with broad-leaved marsh-grass and water-plants, lay between them and the fence of a plantation which was full of brushwood. Down they plunged from the canal-bank without a moment's consideration, right into the water, mid-leg deep, and the reeds almost met above their heads. There was no time to think; Betty's ducks quacked and scrambled about in the basket.

"Keep your ducks still!" said Nanny.

But the ducks would not be kept still; the sound of the navigators' feet was heard, and the murmur of their low, gruff voices which boded no good. The ducks *must* be silenced; so Nanny, quick as thought, set down her basket and wrung the necks of those in her sister's. On they rushed through the water, through the plantation hedge, and down into the brushwood, just as the navigators came up.

"They must be gone in here," said they, stopping short; the girls' hearts almost ceased to beat for terror. "Yes, they must be gone in here," repeated one man. "Let 's fetch up the dog," said the other, "and he 'll hunt them out."—"Good!" returned the other, shortly; and they set off back again, at the same short trot as before. Their heavy and iron-heeled boots sounded on the canal-bank, and the girls had hardly strength to lift their heads. They looked upon themselves as lost creatures, and began to cry. Supposing even that they reached home safe, what would their mother say to find the ducks not only unsold, but those in Betty's basket dead! They were almost out of their senses, when the snuffing of a dog near to them, and a short, sharp bark, filled them afresh with new terror; the men must be come

back again, and with them the dog, and they should be taken at once. They screamed in a frantic horror, and the little dog barked loudly, and the next moment a tall, quiet-looking gentleman, powdered, and in a complete suit of black, stood beside them. "What were they doing here?" he asked gravely. The girls looked one at another, and said not a word; they had been almost frightened to death, and Nanny declared that the cold perspiration ran in streams down her face, and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth. However, after the question had been once or twice repeated, and that without the gentleman's seeming to lose his temper, they were able to tell the cause of their terror, and their sad disaster about the ducks which they had been obliged to kill.

"You cannot reach home to-night," said the gentleman, gravely; "so come with me." They had no fear whatever of his doing them any harm, so they took up their baskets and followed him. And now that all immediate sense of danger was removed, the thought of the dead ducks haunted them fearfully. What would their mother say?—the very thought of their trouble made them cry afresh.

The gentleman stopped and asked what they were crying about; they told him; he made no reply, but smiling a little, as if to himself, he walked on, and they followed him.

They went on and on, for a couple of miles at least, but where to they had not the slightest idea. At length the plantation opened, and they came into a park-like space, where old trees grew singly or in groups, and beautiful herds of deer were quietly

grazing. The gentleman went on, and they, with their two baskets, and their tired feet, and frightened hearts, trudged after. Anon, and they entered broad gravel walks among shrubbery, which here and there opened into the most beautiful flower-gardens. The sun was just setting, and its slanting rays threw the most dazzling radiance over everything. The next turn brought them directly to the front of a house, which looked to them grander even than the Cathedral at Lichfield. Tall marble columns, broad flights of steps; strange-looking gigantic plants in vases; long rows of lofty, shining windows, draped with crimson and gold-coloured curtains, quite bewildered them; they said not a word to one another; they felt as if they should never speak again, and on they went, with their baskets and their dusty feet, and their shabby little bonnets, past all this grandeur. Presently they came to the other side of the house, and winding among shrubbery they entered a door which led through many passages, where rows and rows of bells hung, into a room, where sat an old lady —the lady of this grand mansion as they at first imagined—behind a great figured screen, before a table upon which stood seven tall loaves of sugar, while she seemed to be breaking up an eighth into a large bowl which she held on her knee. She had a "flowered gown" on, and a fine muslin cap, and a fine linen apron, and had something very stately about her. The children curtseyed down to the very ground, whilst the gentleman said something very rapidly to her in an under tone, to which, standing up, she replied merely, "Yes, sir; yes, sir;" and then, without taking any more notice of them, he went out. The

old lady put on her spectacles, and surveyed the children from head to foot for some seconds, and then, taking off the spectacles again, bade them set down their baskets and take off their bonnets.

"How shall we ever get home to-night!" exclaimed they both in terror. "You will stop here to-night," said the old lady, and again bade them do as she had said. They felt frightened, and, as if they dared not disobey, put down their baskets and took off their bonnets. She then made them sit down and relate to her their adventures; and when she heard that they had asked half-a-crown a couple for their ducks, she interrupted them by exclaiming that it was a shameful price, and she wondered how they could ever have the face to ask it. They felt as if they could not say another word, they were so much abashed; they looked at one another, and then at the ducks, and were ready to cry; they wished that they were but at home, and felt that they were a *very* long way off.

After they had finished their relation, the old lady gave them something to eat for their suppers; what it was they did not know; but it was something so very good, that they ate of it till they were ashamed and could eat no more. They were then taken into a little room, which was on the ground floor, and which she called the page's-room, where was a bed, and they were told that they must sleep, but not before their baskets, emptied of the ducks, were brought into the room and set down, with their money, as they were told, safely pinned in the cloth, which had been laid in one basket because the bottom was bad. The room seemed to them very lofty and grand. There was some gilding on the bed and the

window cornice, and a deal of fine coloured drapery. Wondering whatever sort of a book it was, a page of which needed a bed like a human creature, they undressed themselves and lay down, and after awhile dropped asleep.

But their sleep was not easy, and at length Nanny woke. All was still in the house, and it was just getting light in the early morning. She felt very poorly, "so sick and badly," she said, as she had never felt before.

"Oh, Betty," said she, shaking her sister, "wake, for I am so ill!" Betty woke in an instant, nay, she was half awake already, and she too confessed that she felt very queer. What were they to do? They got up and looked out of the window. Their little chamber seemed to project forward, and gave them a view down the long, grand front. There, as on the last night, was the long row of lofty windows, the marble pillars, and the broad steps.

"Oh, I wish I was at home!" groaned Nanny, now lying on the floor in an agony of strange pain.

"I do think we are poisoned," said Betty, "it must be that stuff that we had last night, that had been boiled in a brass pan!"

"Let's get out of the window, and into the fresh air," said Nanny, who now felt ready to faint. They dressed themselves, but not without difficulty, and then got out of the window.

"Let's go home, let's go home as fast as we can!" said poor Nanny. "If we shall ever reach home," said Betty, dolefully, who had now mounted the window-sill. "Bring the baskets with you," said Nanny, and Betty, who had forgotten them, slipped

back for them, as much frightened as if she had been a thief, lest the people of the house should come in and seize upon her.

They were now both of them out in the fresh air—but it did them no good at first; they were dizzy, and faint, and weak, and so out of spirits and frightened lest they were poisoned, that they both began to cry.

"Oh I wish we were but at home!" said they, and went on as fast as their legs would carry them. In awhile they felt better; their quick movement and the fresh air restored them; and then the thought occurred what would the people say when they found them gone, and gone too in that sneaking kind of way, and they never could know why they had done so. They knew not what to do exactly; they were by this time half-way back to the canal by the way they had come the last evening, which was very direct. They felt as if they were afraid of going back, so on they went, and reached the scene of their last night's terror. They flew along the canal-side, but saw nothing; and then the rest of the way was easy and familiar to them. They reached home about six o'clock, just as their mother was setting out on her way to Rugeley to find them. It was a long and strange history that they had to tell; now their mother grew very angry, and now she laughed; but when she heard what the old lady at the hall had said about half-a-crown being a shameful price for each couple of her ducks, she went into a great passion, and demanded, "Well, what had she paid?" The children had never thought about that, and then, quite frightened and anxious, unpinned the corner of the towel to see

what really had been put in, and then what was their astonishment to find not *two* half-crowns, but *four!*

"The lady must have thought that the ducks were half-a-crown a-piece!" exclaimed the mother. The children protested that they had said half-a-crown a couple. The mother said that the father must go over and make it all right.

"And did he go?" our young readers will inquire naturally; we asked the same question; but Nanny did not seem to know, she said that she supposed he did, but neither she nor Betty ever rightly knew what place it was at which they had been—for Hagley and Worseley Halls, the only two which lay in this direction, at which they had ever been, were very different to the fine palace at which they had slept.

Nanny did not sing, but she had a wild kind of recitative, in which, while she rocked her body backwards and forwards, she would pass hours in thus chanting old popular songs and ballads. She was a sort of humble Bishop Percy, and she knew by heart every song that ever swung in the wind on a ballad-monger's stall. She would often illustrate her songs by narratives, and her narratives by songs.

But enough of Nanny; we will now turn to something else.

CHAPTER VI.

FAMILY PURCHASES.

A YEAR or two after her son's death, our neighbour, Mrs. Gilbert, also died. It was, as on the occa-

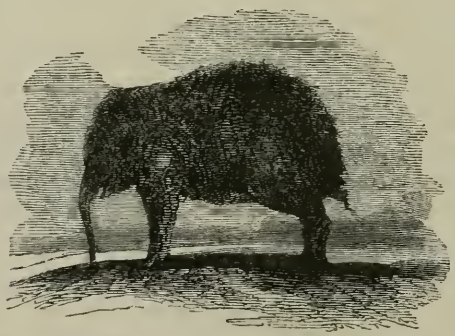
sion of her son's funeral, also a bright summer day on which she was buried. Our father was one of those who attended her to the grave, and like all the other mourners received also his hatband and scarf, whilst a large packet of burial-cake was sent to the house, and, of course, enjoyed by us. That, however, which made Mrs. Gilbert's death most interesting to us children, was that our mother told us that our father had bought her house, and that we should go with her to look over it, and to walk in the garden. In that garden I had never been, though it adjoined ours, nor had Anna, excepting on that memorable occasion when she crept through the fence.

It was a marvellously old-fashioned garden, with edges of box to the walks a foot high. There were all kinds of old-fashioned plants in it, vervain, and marsh-mallow, and hellebore, and spurge, and tansy. That which, however, appeared to us the strangest, was the being in that garden into which we had so often looked, and from it seeing how our garden looked—both so familiar, yet now seen from such new points of view.

Our mother told us, that great changes were contemplated by our father in this garden; it was to be laid to our own, the separating fence removed, and thus all this space would be ours. It was the grandest idea that ever had entered our heads, we could talk of nothing else. And how would it be? And when would it be? Would it be done this summer, or next winter? We were quite troublesome with our questions, not only that day but the next, and the next after that for a week, till at last our mother, wearied by our inquiries, said she was

sorry that she had told us anything about it, for thus she saw that she should have no rest. We were rebuked, and asked no more about it for the present, though we thought as much about it as ever.

This same summer our father bought a deal of land; the sloping, pleasant fields opposite, and some land also two miles off, beyond those fields, as far off as we could see. It was an infinite delight to us to walk to these two purchases in a summer's evening, as we often did with our parents; everybody thought that there were no walks in the neighbourhood so pleasant as these. Those sloping fields opposite we had looked at ever since we had looked at anything; but until they were our own, we had never been at the top of them. The top of those fields was very remarkable to me in my very earliest years. There stood there what seemed to me an immense elephant, or monstrous beast, thus—



I never saw it as anything else. I was not at all afraid of it, for I saw it every day. Once, I said to a visitor, when in a very talkative humour, that a

great black elephant always stood opposite to our house. My parents reproved me for saying that which was not true. I stoutly maintained that it was so; my firmness seemed like wilful obstinacy, and I was reproved severely; but I would not withdraw my assertion, and my parents, grieving to see such perversity, thought it much better to let the subject drop. This affair sunk deep in my mind. I saw the elephant every day as plain as could be, but I dared not recur to the subject, because it had given so much displeasure. The fields, however, were bought, and then we went to the very top of them, and as I ascended the hill my elephant was gone, there was nothing at all but two dark Scotch firs and a slender ash tree growing beside them, thus—

The whole thing was disenchanted, and when I returned home, though I still by a stretch of imagination could see the elephant, it gradually became three distinct trees. I never, as I remember, mentioned it to any one, not even to Anna, but it made a deep impression on my mind, and has given me great

charity with the exaggerations and even the apparent falsehood of children.

A footpath was now made across the meadow at the bottom of the garden; a little rustic bridge was thrown across the stream, and almost every evening some one or other, if not the whole family, strolled out for a walk in this direction. The evening was always the time for recreation with our family. When we did not go out into these fields, our parents took a drive some five or six miles into the beautiful country which surrounded the town, and I and my sister alternately accompanied them. There was a little turn-down seat in the gig, upon which we were seated between their knees. I always enjoyed these drives, and should have enjoyed them much more had it not been for the conversations of which I was the auditor. Strange that the conversation of two affectionate parents should trouble a little child, but it was so. My father every morning read the newspapers, and in the evening detailed their contents to my mother. Napoleon was at that time in the full career of his victories. Invasion even of England was talked of; timid people dreaded it as possible; prudent ones talked of preparations against it; brave ones of resisting it to the death. My parents talked of the horrors which every day saw perpetrated in the crimsoned path of the conqueror; blood and fire, and outrage of every kind. They talked of this, and then of its perhaps coming home to our own doors; and then they counselled with each other what was to be done, supposing Napoleon, or Buonaparte, as everybody then called him, really should come. Fight, England would to a man, that was certain. The sea-coasts would

first feel the scourge of his presence; they talked of the probable point of his landing, of the probable resistance he would meet with; and of course until he had effected a landing and beaten back, if that were possible, the collected force that would oppose him, he needed not to be looked for in the midland counties. Living thus, as we did, in the very heart of the kingdom, we might regard ourselves as among the safest people there, but still, after all that the conqueror had already done, who could tell what it might be the will of the Almighty to permit him yet to do?

Thus our parents talked to each other. We, as children, knew the histories of the Israelitish and Jewish wars; they were to us deeply interesting but horrible relations, and we now shuddered to think that such things as were recorded to have happened in them would perhaps be done on our own thresholds. I told Anna what I heard, and she told me in turn all that she heard, and thus together we wrought ourselves up to such a pitch of terror that our very sleep was broken by it. The worst of it was that our grandfather, and another old gentleman or two, who were great readers of prophecies of all kinds, were always coming to our house and telling what they thought and expected, and bringing pamphlets and printed sheets of paper—old and new prophecies, visions, and strange astrological calculations and revelations—all of which applied as they believed to the present times. I have not even now lost the feeling of awe with which I heard or read Christ's prophetic account of the siege and taking of Jerusalem.

We children, of course, never took part in these

conversations; but we drank in and pondered on every word. My mother's callers talked always on the same subjects; wars and bloody battles, and death in battle, and being taken prisoner and subjected to all kinds of sufferings and horrors in the French prisons, were the constant themes of discourse. One lady, I remember, related how she had formed all her plans in case the French got possession of the town; all the plate and valuables were to be secured in closets in the walls, which were to be papered over so that no door or opening should be visible; the family was to be hidden in the cellars, where provision could be stored, and where already was plenty of wine. Another lady said that her little girl was so glad that they lived in a town, because it would be so much pleasanter to die in a crowd!

During all these terrors, however, the new purchases were made, and great was the pleasure which they afforded. We wondered and wondered when the two gardens would be laid together, but new people came to the house as my father's tenants, and the winter came on without any further change.

But I must not omit here to mention one little incident which occurred to my sister, and which made a deep impression upon her. She had, during the latter part of good Mrs. Gilbert's life, been accustomed to receive so many flowers from her garden, that she began to look upon those which grew near the gap in the hedge almost as her own. At the bottom of the border and within reach of the gap there grew this autumn a very fine prince's-feather; it was a new flower to us, and greatly

excited poor Anna's admiration and desire of possession. The new neighbours were a grave gentleman, and his wife who had infirm health, and but rarely came into the garden; he, on the contrary, walked much in it, with a solemn step and in a sad-coloured dressing-gown, tan leather slippers, and wig to match. A very different person was this to the kind Mrs. Gilbert; he never once vouchsafed a look, much less a word to the little girl who stood with longing eyes glancing at the fine purple prince's-feather. In vain the poor child manœuvred; he walked on and took no notice of her. The prince's-feather grew more beautiful every day; she could think of nothing else. "If Mrs. Gilbert were alive she would give it to me," thought she; "all the flowers that grew there used to be mine; if I took it he would never miss it; and of all the flowers that ever grew I should like to have that!" The neighbour in the sad-coloured dressing-gown was in his own house—his wife was in bed—there was nobody near—she put her hand through the hedge and touched it—it nodded and shook, and looked grander than ever—she broke it off, and drew it to her. But no sooner was the flower on this side the hedge, than a new feeling sprang up in her heart—"If anybody had seen her!" and "What should she do with it now?" She dared not to take it into the house, or show it anybody—it was no longer beautiful—she wished it was again growing on its own stem. She wished she could only get rid of it. It was a miserable possession. She hid herself in an old garden-house and began to cry. But crying did little good; the hateful flower was before her, and the fear was in her

mind that the decapitated stem would reveal the theft to the severe neighbour. For the first time in her life a sense of guilt lay on her soul, and she was miserable; in an agony of remorse she tore the flower to pieces and hid it among a heap of rubbish; but it was many days before she was restored to peace with herself, nor did she again ever venture to peep through the gap at the flower-bed, nor to be seen in the garden when the neighbour was taking his daily walks.

During the winter we had a large party. Large parties were very rare things with us, but when they occurred they afforded us a great deal of pleasure. In the first place, there were many good things made, of which, sooner or later, we came in for our share; but on this occasion a still greater pleasure was promised us—we were to sit up to supper, we had never done such a thing in our lives before; at eight o'clock punctually we had always been in bed, but now came a noble exception; the principal cause of this was that some guests were invited from the Forest, who would bring two little daughters of our own age with them. They had to come six miles, and were to stay all night. A deep snow fell the day before the party, but nobody thought much of that; the next night, however, one of those great snows fell which were then not so uncommon; the very doors and lower windows were snowed up. Everything seemed hushed and silent as death till men came and dug an entrance to the different houses, and carried away the snow from the streets in carts. The roads were all buried in snow, and there was neither coming to nor going from the town till late

in the afternoon. We were sadly anxious about the expected guests; our mother had no expectations that our friends from the Forest could reach us; we, however, would not give them up, and made ready all our little preparations for the children's entertainment; and in the afternoon, as our mother had predicted, a servant came over on horseback to say that it was impossible for any carriage on that day to drive between us and them. The disappointment was greater than we could express, and to console us, our mother said that, though we had no guests ourselves, we should be permitted all the same to sit up, if we would keep awake and be quiet. We easily made this promise, for we knew that we could keep it, and then bore our disappointment as well as we could. The sitting-rooms were lighted up; the curtains drawn, the sofa wheeled towards the fire; the tables were all set out in visiting trim, and everything to our eyes looked festal. We thought our mother splendid in her pale-coloured silk gown, and we ourselves no less so, as, appareled in our best, we sat on the stools, one on each side the fire, with our hair as smooth as brush could make it, and our hands laid together on our knees. The company came; what a buzz and warmth there seemed to be in the room, and how wonderfully good the tea was, and the tea-cakes and the thin bread and butter! Children in families where company comes but now and then, really and thoroughly enjoy it when it does come. What a luxury to such children is even thin bread and butter!

It was now after our usual bed-time, and to us it seemed as if grand and wonderful doings must go on

every night after we were in bed. Our parents often had a few friends with them to spend the evening, and, forgetting that things on such a grand scale as this night's entertainment really hardly occurred once a year, it seemed to us as if the movements of an unknown and brighter existence began after we were in bed. The candles looked so white and burned so brightly; the fire was so cheerful, everything looked so gay! We sat together quietly, and people said that they had never seen such good children. When we felt a little sleepy, we took out our conversation cards and sat down to play at a little table by ourselves. There was a very grave and religious person in the company, who it seems had the greatest horror of cards. I remember his coming up to our table and watching us play, but without saying one word to us; when he remarked, as if to himself, "A nice amusement—but pity 'tis that they are called cards!" We did not at all know what he meant; nor did I really understand till some years afterwards.

But that which more than anything else made this evening remarkable to us was, that our father brought out plans, and estimates, and various rolls of paper, and talked with his friends of the alterations which he was going to make as soon as the spring and settled weather began. And thus we learnt that not only the next garden was going to be laid to ours, but our own house was actually going to be altered. Such an idea as this had never entered our heads; we put aside our cards and listened with all our senses alive. We could talk of nothing for days but the alterations which were going to begin in spring; the anticipations of these, and the certain

prospect now of the two gardens so soon coming together, drove for the present all thoughts of the terrible Buonaparte out of our heads.

CHAPTER VII.

TOWN CUSTOMS.

Two or three of these were very interesting to us; and first and foremost that which was for the first time this winter quite a family affair: some of the land which our father had bought was subject to a yearly payment of money, or "a dole," as it was called, to the poor. Numberless were the applications which were made by the poor to our parents on this behalf, and our mother, perhaps, in consequence of this, began about this time to inquire more than ever into their state. She often took one or both of us with her on these occasions, and we began to take the most lively interest about our poor and distressed townspeople. Our mother made observations on paper on all she saw, and then, according to their wants, they were to receive a portion of the dole.

In another distribution of money we also took a lively interest, even from the time when we were very little children indeed. This was on the occasion of begging Monday, or the first Monday before Christmas, when the poor of the parish had the privilege of going from house to house, where they received money or provisions; such as potatoes, flour, or meal, &c. Originally, probably, this dis-

pensing to the poor had been general; now it was only confined to certain wealthy or old housekeepers, who, for charity's sake, or for the sake of the family custom, still continued it. It had always been given in our family, and our mother was no way inclined to discontinue it, and we children took a most lively interest in it. On the preceding Saturday there came from one of the tradespeople a large basket full of pence, and we were up early on the Monday morning to be the dispensers of it. After breakfast, our mother, in her bonnet and cloak and gloves, stood at the open door, and we two, one on each side, the one as her right hand and the other as her left, stood and gave, according to her directions, more or less, as she knew the applicants to be deserving or in distress.

Many and many were the blessings that both we and our mother received on that day. Pity is it that such a good old custom should ever fall into disuse.

The third custom of the town was not by any means as praiseworthy as this; it was the annual bull-baiting—a practice which our father combated for many years, and at last succeeded in entirely putting an end to. This bull-baiting occurred in the autumn. At the fair at that season a handsome bull was bought, and a day or two before the baiting was led round the town decorated with ribands, and attended by a rude rabble of men and boys. The patrons of the sport on this occasion gave money, some more and some less; at our house, of course, nothing was ever given. We watched with a kind of horror the passing of this procession from our

nursery window, and Nanny, who seemed not to have by any means the abhorrence of the thing which we had been taught to feel, took the liveliest interest in it, and even once, to the great scandal of the whole household, threw out a riband for the bull's horns. On the morning of the bull-baiting, towards four or five o'clock, the inhabitants of the town were awoke in their beds by the bull's chain being struck violently against the walls of their houses and on the pavement before them. In the early, chill grey of the morning it came—a sort of yell and a banging of this heavy iron chain, and a rattling, and a grinding, another yell, and then they went on.

Again the bull, decorated with garlands and ribands, was led round the town, accompanied by all the rabble of the neighbourhood, hallooing and shouting like so many savages. We always watched the procession go by, and always felt a kind of curdling horror. At ten o'clock the bull was fixed to the stake in the market-place, and such of the higher class of the inhabitants as patronised the sport occupied the upper windows of the houses, and the market-place itself was thronged with people, leaving a space in the middle for the poor creature and his tormentors.

Whilst we were playing in the garden on the three days that this lasted we heard the barking and the yelling of the dogs, and the roar of the bull, and the shouts of the people. Sometimes, too, the creature broke his chain, and ran furiously through the streets, driving everything before him, and often doing much damage. If the bull came as far as our house, we

never failed to see it, for to us, of course, this was a very fearful, but interesting spectacle, and furnished enough to talk of for a week.

After the third day's sport the bull was shot. This seemed to me like a sort of murder, and I remember very innocently saying what I really felt, that I wondered that old William Woolley, who shot the bull, was not afraid of being haunted by his ghost. I said this gravely, meaning what I said, before grown-up people, and I could not conceive why everybody burst into a fit of laughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

GUESTS.

In the early spring we were told that we were shortly to have some playfellows, for that a distant relation of our father's was coming to remove with his family to this town, and until they were settled would pay us a visit. It was a great happiness for us to think of playfellows; we could talk of nothing else. At length the day came when they were expected; they were to be with us at dinner; the guest chambers were prepared for them, and we had our new and best printed frocks on for dinner. Their name was Shepperley, and the children were a boy and a girl; we wondered indeed how we should ever manage with the boy. At the expected time they came. They were unlike any people that we had ever seen; from the first moment there was

something quite overwhelming about them. The father and mother were large people, who talked loud, and some way or other gave one the idea of taking up a great deal of room. As he walked up and down our sitting-room, holding his head very high, he made one feel how short and narrow it was, and seemed to bring down the very ceiling. He was one of those persons who depreciates one's possessions. Hurriedly glancing out of our window, he said to our father, "that he had a pretty little look-out—a pretty little place altogether; but that the rooms were small and low;" and then he turned round again and began to walk, and held up his head as if he had hardly room to breathe. "Everything looked fresh and nice," he said, "in our house; but things always did so in the country," he added, as if afraid of complimenting us in any way. The wife lay on the sofa without changing her travelling dress, and declared that she could eat none of the dinner that stood on the table; "she had a very delicate appetite," she said; "the breast of a chicken or so, she might have eaten, but lamb and such things she could not touch."

Our father and mother exchanged glances; they were both bursting with chagrin and anger, but they said nothing; and our mother, who was naturally so polite to all her guests, did not even offer her a cup of chocolate.

If our parents had vexation with their guests, so had we with ours. The boy was Bob; a fair complexioned boy, with prominent eyes and a large mouth, and was full of all kinds of mischievous pranks. His sister, Rosaline, rushed into the bed-

room, locked the door, and began to tell us how Bob was the plague of her life; and all this time Bob was kicking and thumping at the door, and demanding admittance.

"You'd better undo the door, miss, and give me my things," said he; "or I'll make you repent of it. I'll tell about you and the port wine, miss, if you don't."

On this Rosaline unlocked the door and threw out the bag which contained what he wanted, and then hastily re-locking the door, she began to take off her things; but long before she was ready the active Bob was heard loudly whistling down in the garden. Rosaline was a handsome, well-grown girl, with a deal of light-brown hair and a fair complexion; she wore trousers, which we did not; and went with one shoe down at the heel, which was a thing we never had dared to do. We thought her very free-spoken and very much at her ease; we felt almost as if we were the strangers and she at home; as if we had nothing to say before her, while she was remarkably fluent and unabashed. We could not tell whether we liked her or not.

Rosaline's father thought that we were very short of our age; made his daughter measure against us, and found, as he had anticipated, that she was taller than either of us, although in age she was exactly between us.

Master Bob was not forthcoming at dinner-time; he was found among the barrels which were in the yard in preparation for brewing, and came in five minutes after we had begun. On this his father rated him soundly; called him "Sir," and said he would

teach him better, or he would flog him to within an inch of his life. The mother, who lay on the sofa, interfered for him, and said that he had so much spirit, it was quite excusable. Our guests seemed to have all the talking to themselves at dinner; our parents, like us, were unusually silent, and our guests perhaps thought them uncourteous, and therefore talked to each other.

After dinner we children went into the garden, and Bob, with sundry winks of his large eyes, and upward noddings of his chin, invited us all to follow him into the yard, to those very barrels which had occupied him before dinner. The barrels were standing without bungs, and were full of water. He drew his sister on first, and pointed into one, when she exclaimed, "Oh, for shame, Bob, how could you!" "It is a new, patent bung," said he; "and now you look," added he, drawing us on also.

We looked; and oh! what shall describe our horror! there was our own tortoise-shell kitten crammed in as a bung! We could hardly believe our eyes: of course the kitten was drowned; it was a deed of wanton cruelty which exceeded all our ideas of possibility. We cried and would not be comforted; "and made," Rosaline said, "such a piece of work about it," that she took her brother's part, and endeavoured to make light of it; but her attempts only made matters worse: we stormed and raged, I have no doubt, famously, and treating our guests with very little ceremony, told them plainly that we wished they had never come.

Leaving my sister with them in the garden, I went in to make complaints, as seemed to me no

more than right, to our parents. Our father had taken Mr. Shepperley to see his new purchases; the lady was asleep, and our mother was alone. She heard my story with what I thought very becoming indignation; but desired me to say nothing of it to our father; this was a very unusual injunction from her, and it struck me as singular. There was no use, she said, in making our father angry with our guests; she did not think they would stay long, and she desired while they were here that we would try to keep peace, and she herself would speak to Bob.

Our father showed Mr. Shepperley all his purchases, pointed out whatever he thought worthy of observation throughout his little demesne; took him to the part of the garden where he thought the best view was to be obtained; showed him how the fence between the two gardens was to come down, and opened to him sundry plans which floated in his mind for the future, more especially regarding the piece of ground which adjoined his late purchase of Mrs. Gilbert's property, of which he designed to become the possessor; more especially because, as the situation was beautiful, he feared it might sometime be purchased for building land, and would thus entirely ruin the view from the house, which he liked so much, as well as take from the whole place that character of retirement in which he so much delighted. All this I heard, as, having not again joined my sister and our new friends, I found my father and Mr. Shepperley in the garden after having returned from their walk. I slipped my hand quietly into my father's, and without saying a word walked

along with them, listening with delighted amazement to all that was said. The idea of our possessing that large piece of ground beyond what had been Mrs. Gilbert's, was something quite new and magnificent. My father seemed to have had it all arranged long ago, for he drew his memorandum-book out of his pocket, and his pencil, and made a plan of the whole place as he should like it to be sometime. Here would be shrubbery; there lawn; here he would bring in water; down that side he would build a fruit-wall; here he would have a conservatory; and down at the far extremity he would have a little farm-yard and a gardener's house. Mr. Shepperley looked very large, and listened with much apparent interest; this subject was our dear father's hobby. His passion was to make a perfect little place, according to his notions—and how natural is such a desire?—and nothing made him so happy as to have a listener. To me the subject was quite as interesting as to himself, and therefore I, perhaps, felt the more angry when Mr. Shepperley suddenly interrupted him in the very midst of his subject, by turning abruptly to me and saying, "Well, little Twopenny, and what has that scapegrace of mine being doing? Has he been pulling your wig, or breaking your dolls' noses?"

I was quite taken by surprise; I did not like to be called "little Twopenny;" nor did I dare to say what Bob had been doing; besides which I thought that he was very rude for interrupting my father. I did not say one word, but hung down my head, and felt that I was looking very foolish.

"Your mamma should teach you to speak when you are spoken to, miss," said Mr. Shepperley.

"Cannot you speak, Mary?" said my father in a tone of vexation, as I thought. I could not. I held my head down lower than ever; the blood seemed tingling up into my ears, and I felt that I looked like a simpleton, and would have given anything to have been away. No more was said to me on the subject: Mr. Shepperley and my father talked of something else, but from that time I never liked him.

It was sometime before the Shepperleys left us. It was a long time before they could suit themselves with a house; my father gave up looking for anything for them at last, and we had workmen in the house beginning the long-talked-of alterations before they really went. Our parents felt a great relief when they were gone; there was a show of friendship on the part of the Shepperleys towards us, but in reality there was none. They were at last offended that they were obliged to go. Our parents had introduced them to many of their oldest friends in the town, and with these they made vehement leagues of friendship: there were such visitings; such making-up of parties; such pic-nicing here and there all that summer. People were so in love with them; talked to us of nothing but them and their doings: they quite cast us into the shade; and had not this been a very busy year in many ways, our parents would perhaps have felt that kind of annoyance which on such occasions makes the heart, as it were, bitter. "It is a bad thing," said our mother notwithstanding, "to place a third person between oneself and one's friends;" and she said that which was very true.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENTFUL YEAR.

Our house was now literally turned inside out. The garden was full of old bricks and lumber of all kinds; we had no use of any of the rooms towards the garden. We lived in the front parlour which my grandfather had formerly occupied, and had not, through the whole summer, a spare bed to offer to any one. My father was quite in his element. He entered body and soul into everything which could improve his place. He was with the workmen directing and inspecting all day long, and as he was with them so much, so were we too. The sitting-room floors were lowered, and thus the rooms were made more lofty, and new and modern windows were put in. We took the greatest interest in all that went forward; we learnt the use of all the workmen's tools; the various names for their different kinds of work; and even made essays at joiner's-work ourselves; we made save-alls, little boxes, dolls' tables, and little houses. It was an active, happy summer, and we had as much delight in the alterations as our father himself. Our mother went out very little all the summer except for the customary evening-drive, and then as usual one of us accompanied them. A perfectly happy summer it would have been, had it not been as usual for the talk of the French.

"Run down to the bottom of the garden and see

if the French are not coming over the New Bridge!" was the often-repeated *ruse* of old James Rotherham, the joiner, when we bothered him for his tools or were in his way.

"The French are coming; are really and truly coming!" said James Dumerlo, the half-silly painter, in the wantonness of a mischievous spirit. "They have burnt Lichfield down to the ground, and have killed all the women and children, and will be here to-night or to-morrow morning at farthest!" And these threats, though they had proved themselves false so many times, never failed, in conjunction with the gloomy conversation we heard continually from persons whose opinions we respected, to cast an unpleasant damp on our spirits.

After many weeks of discomfort, the house began to get into some degree of order; the roughest lumber was cleared away; the coarsest work was done; the floors were all down; the windows in, and the new doors hung. One could get an idea of what the rooms would be when they were finished; the plasterers came, and the finer painters; the little lobby was floored with its diagonal squares of marble, and our parents began busily to talk about the new papers and new carpets, and the new bed for the best room.

Whilst things are progressing to this state, we must interrupt ourselves to mention what had in the meantime occurred. Old Mrs. Carpenter, who lived on our left hand, died, and her body went up to London in a stately hearse to be buried; and shortly afterwards was the great sale by auction, not only of the furniture, plate, linen, and pictures, but of the

house and the whole property altogether. I never heard that our father's desire for purchasing ever extended to this place, or towards the left of our own house at all. Our mother did not even attend the old lady's sale, nor go, as the rest of the gentlewomen of the town did, to look over the house and all that it contained. One morning, however, before the sale we were told that a gentleman and lady were expected to take luncheon at our house. They came; he a stately looking man in volunteer uniform; she a most quiet and elegant woman, and with them came two sweet children about our own age, a boy and girl. We were charmed; we took them into the garden; into the one which had been Mrs. Gilbert's: the fence was taken down, and though we have unaccountably omitted to say so before, had been so ever since spring, and now, like the house, was beginning to get quite in order. We told the children, with whom we became directly familiar, that our father meant to buy the next piece of land which went quite down to the road, and there we were going to have a greenhouse and a fountain, and we could not tell what; in return for all this communication on our part, they informed us that their father was going to buy Mrs. Carpenter's house; that they were coming to live here, and that we would be very good friends when they came; they said that they had worlds of play-things, doll-houses, and books without end. These children were very unlike our late guests, the Shepperleys; no one could be quieter or better behaved than they were: and then they seemed so pleased with us too, and made such ready offers of friendship, that we adopted them at

once into our very hearts. We took them into all our favourite play-places; behind the shrubbery; up into the stable-loft, to which we scrambled through a broken manger-rack to the endangering of our clothes if not of our limbs, and showed them various objects of interest, which they, like us, thought quite worth the trouble. We swung them in our new swing, and had the pleasure of seeing how properly they admired our little gardens with their palisades of peeled willow-twigs, with a gate made like the most regular of gates, all being secured together with minikin pins. Anna was very clever at this fairy-like fencemaking, and contrived with her little pins, which she bent for hinges and hasps, that they should open and shut, and could be fastened with the tiniest of padlocks. The Shepperleys had made sad devastation in our little gardens. Bob had walked in them—and they were only in proportion to our dolls—and had done infinite damage at every step; he had proposed sundry alterations, all of which tended only to disorder and ruin, and then would do nothing to repair his ravages. We had, however, at this happy moment just made all right and straight again; the palings were white as snow, and the Liliputian beds full of small but gay flowers. Our young neighbours elect were in raptures; they had lived in a distant town and had had no garden; they thought that they should be in heaven when they came here, and so near to us.

Our father went with their parents to the next house, and presently we saw them all three walking in the garden, in that stately garden into which we had hitherto hardly dared to peep! The children

called to their parents, the parents answered, and the next moment the father, in his volunteer regimentals, came to the hedge and said that he would lift us all over. He was a very good-natured man, and jumped us high above the hedge till we seemed to be flying. And now we were on the very gravel-walks where Mrs. Carpenter in her calash and clogs had so often walked. "And now run off with you," said the merry-tempered father, "run off every one of you;" and we, glad to have permission, scampered off, and peeped into all the holes and corners of the old lady's dominions.

In the afternoon our visitors left us; and our parents only echoed our own opinions, when at tea they said that they thought we should have very agreeable neighbours in the Taylors.

The sale took place, and, as was expected, Captain Taylor bought the place. In a few weeks the gentleman and lady and their servants came, but not the children; they were now with some friends, and were to come later when the house was in order. This was at first a disappointment to us, and would have been more so had we not been so much occupied by our own affairs. It was now getting towards the end of summer; the newly-laid out garden was really beautiful; there had been a good deal of rain in July, and the new turf which had been laid down had grown nicely. Year-old hollyhocks had been planted, and were now in full flower; there were China asters and French marigolds, making it quite splendid with their gorgeous intermingling of colours. Our mother often walked in the garden, and so of course did we; and I remember that autumn being

first awoke to the beauty of the garden as a whole, not looking at it, as I had hitherto done, as it were piecemeal, with childish eyes.

Sometimes, but not very often, the Shepperleys came; our parents evidently did not like them; they were always very handsomely dressed and talked a great deal, but nobody ever was sorry when they were gone. They had become, as I said before, wonderfully intimate with the friends of our parents, and always told how one and another of our acquaintance had formed a party to go here and there, and they, the Shepperleys, quite expected to have seen us there. "It was a pity we had not been invited, for it had gone off delightfully; Mrs. So-and-so had driven her, Mrs. Shepperley, over to Lichfield, to see the new monument by Chantrey there; our mother ought to see it; she wondered Mrs. So-and-so had never driven her over." So talked the lady in-doors; whilst the gentleman, who never failed to find our father among his bricks and mortar, mostly drew comparisons between the small scale of things with us, and what he had been used to. Our father was not lightly to be put out of conceit with his place, however much he might be stung by occasional invidious remarks. But the garden was now our father's pride; it looked somewhat finished, and showed that his notions of things, after all, were not much amiss. Mr. Shepperley talked of the handsome grounds he had had; our father of those which he meant to have, whenever he could buy the adjoining piece of land; never failing to add, that he hoped it never would come into anybody's head to build or in any way block out his view. The idea of this being

ever done, was the bugbear that troubled our father's peace.

After Midsummer, the young Shepperleys went to school; to schools which our parents' intimate friends had recommended, because, said Mrs. Shepperley, they were so charmed with the idea of their own children having such delightful companions as Bob and his sister. We children could not help feeling vexed at everybody being so taken by the Shepperleys, though for our own sakes we were glad to be rid of them.

Owing to the state of the house this summer, and to another cause also which we then did not understand, our parents saw but very little company; our mother was often indisposed, and it seemed to us as if Mrs. Shepperley had taken her place with all her friends. Nanny, who never could bear the Shepperleys, vented high indignation against them continually. "There she goes, stuck up like a turkey-cock!" she would say, "a mischief-making, interloping thing! I've heard what she has said of our missis, and she not good enough to carry our missis's shoes after her! I wish I could only let her feel the length of my tongue. But pride goes before a fall!" said Nanny consolingly.

In the autumn the town was in a state of great excitement, from the circumstance of the first stage-coach passing through it. We children had never in our lives seen a stage-coach. Pictures of such things with their four gallantly prancing horses we had seen, but an actual coach never. The letters came by a boy, who fetched them daily from a neighbouring town, through which the mail passed; he rode a

little lean horse, and notified his exit from and entrance to the town, by blowing a shrill tin horn. Often he came with blue and red ribands streaming from his hat, at unusual speed, and blowing his horn louder than ever, for then he brought what was called "good news," news of some victory over the terrible Buonaparte; and then, within a quarter of an hour after his arrival, the bells were loudly ringing, and the gentlemen were hurrying off themselves or sending their servants full drive to the post-office for their newspapers, being too impatient to wait the slow mode of ordinary delivery. Not less exciting too, though in another way, were the times when the same Mercury came speeding in, and wildly sounding his horn, undecorated with ribands, announcing some great defeat—some terrible advance of the great foe—some city laid in ashes—some ten thousand gallant men cut to pieces; and people then hurried along the town, asking in fearful eagerness the particulars one of another.

Nothing more enlivening than this passed, in an ordinary way, through the town, when at this time every creature was alert with the thoughts of the daily passing of the stage-coach. It was to travel from Manchester to London, and went through Birmingham. It made quite an excitement; it had been talked of for some weeks, and now the day was actually come when it was to be seen for the first time.

Our parents ordered Nanny to take us opposite the inn, that we might see it come in, change horses, and then set off again. Children who have seen stage-coaches all their lives, can have no idea what an event this first stage-coach really was. I never felt so excited

in my life as when it came dashing down the street all covered with ribands, and flags flying, and a French-horn blowing, for in those days stage-coaches had their guards. All the town was up; people hurrahed, and waved their hats, and were quite enthusiastic. Horses, now-a-days, are changed in a coach in three minutes, but it was not so then; they must have been a full twenty minutes over it, but that was all the better, for there was the more time to notice everything thoroughly. But in time all was ready, and then off it went again. The horses galloped, the ribands and the flags streamed gallantly, and the flourish of the French-horn playing "Rule Britannia," almost drowned the rattling of the wheels.

All that evening we could talk of nothing but the coach; we could play at nothing but the coach. Fortunately the new papers were come for the rooms, and the next morning the floors were strewn with long strips which had been cut from the edges of the pieces of paper; some were red, and some blue—they were ribands for our coach; we tied them on a stick, and carrying this in one hand while with the other we held the reins, one of us acted the four horses, and the other the coach. To our fancy it was complete; we ran round and round the garden, and imitated, the best we could, the triumphing of the French-horn. Whilst we were thus in the midst of our glory, a most welcome sound, all at once, arrested our career. "I say, we are come!" sounded from the other side of the hedge; and the two heads of our long-expected neighbours were seen peeping over. The coach flew round to that side, and the most hearty congratulations followed. But what was our astonish-

ment to learn that they had actually come by the coach on its upward journey this morning—actually and truly had come inside that beautiful coach, and could tell us all about it! Their uncle had brought them—and nothing in this world could equal the delight of riding in a coach. It must be, however, we all agreed, very dangerous riding outside; they said there was somebody on the outside that screamed once, but everybody laughed; they wished we could all four of us go together in the coach! For many days nothing was done in both gardens but driving about the stage-coach; they had paper streamers like ours; we arranged our inns at the same point in the hedge, we cut up cake and apple for dinner, and were most gloriously happy. It was an understood thing by us, and by the other children also no doubt, that without especial permission from the parents, no invitations were to be given to come over or through the fence. We brought little chairs, on which we stood, and laying a board on the broad well-clipped fence, managed all our business as at a table. We never were so happy in our lives; we left the workmen to get on with their papering and painting: we troubled ourselves not at all about the making of the new carpets, new curtains, or the new bed; we hardly gave ourselves time to eat our dinners, we were so anxious to be together again.

For the first time in our lives, we now had intimate friends of our own age. John, the brother, dissipated all our prejudice against boys—we began to think what a charming thing it would be to have a brother. Sara, the girl, had tastes just like our own, but she knew a deal more of the world than we did, had been

to a boarding-school, at a dancing-master's ball, and had read endless little novels and tales about fine officers and ladies, and was exceedingly fond of telling them over and over again. She opened quite a new world to us, and we could not help wondering why our parents did not let us do as she and her brother did, for there really was something remarkably charming in it. Much of a woman as Sara seemed to be in comparison with us in experience of life, she disdained none of our simpler tastes and amusements. The fact was, these all came with the full charm of novelty to her. Above everything were they both bewitched by the passion for gardening. They must have gardens just like us: a larger garden and a smaller one, quite a fairy concern, with its palisades of peeled osiers, and its little gate that opened and shut. Nothing but the garden hedge and the walk on each side divided our gardens: the hedge grew ever thinner and thinner—it was really wonderful how low and thin it grew; we could now see each other at work; we needed no chair or stool now to give us a view of each other's faces, we could easily have gone backwards and forwards before the summer was over, but as I recollect we never did; each remembered the command of their parents and adhered to it. Our parents often said, as if we had nothing to do in it, that the hedge was getting remarkably thin and that it must be mended, but fortunately they did not often come down the side walks, so it never got mended till the next spring.

The autumn went on—we ate apples and cracked nuts together, and as the days grew colder came out in warm spencers and woollen handkerchiefs, and now

and then received an admonition, not always very welcome, not to keep standing so much; that it was getting damp and chilly in the evenings, and we must not go out after tea.

The Taylors were completely settled in their new house; we had paid the family a congratulatory visit, which to us children was an infinite happiness. Sara Taylor had whole drawers-full of unconverted finery for her dolls—she was munificent in her presents to ours. John had a rocking-horse, and the evening we spent there was a delightful time indeed. Our house too by this time was in complete order; it answered everybody's expectation; the new carpets and new furniture had quite a handsome appearance —and our favourite neighbours came to return the family visit. All our parents' friends called, but we were told that for the present there would be very little visiting.

Our mother did not spin this winter; indeed after this time I believe that she did not spin at all. It was now November—dull, short days, and as we could not see much of our neighbours in the garden, we amused ourselves by reading the books which they lent us by the nursery fire. We had all the more time for this, as our mother, as it seemed to us rather singularly, required us to do but very few lessons.

One morning, I shall never forget it, it was the most remarkable morning of our young lives, and only exceeded in interest by a morning which occurred later, and of which I shall have to speak in its place: one morning, in November, we were saluted on waking with the astonishing news that we had a little sister born. If we had been told that the

sky had fallen, it would not have surprised us more. We had never had the slightest idea that there could be more children in the family than ourselves, and now there was another little sister! We sprang out of bed; dressed ourselves with the utmost speed, hardly, in fact, stayed to finish dressing, and attended by Nanny, who was very solemn in her manner, were conducted to our mother's chamber-door. The sound of a baby's voice reached our ears as we approached; we had hardly ever heard such a sound in the house before, and a feeling of love and joy rushed through our hearts. I felt as if I was choked, as if I really must cry; I looked at Anna, and she really was crying. The next moment we saw the little stranger lying in the nurse's lap, in the lap of that old woman who had of late been going backwards and forwards to our house, and we never could imagine what was her business.

The stage-coach; our gardens; our new acquaintance; our dolls, all seemed insignificant and worthless in comparison with the darling little sister. No young mother was ever so pleased with her first-born as we with this little unexpected stranger, who we were informed was to be called Emma.

We waited a long time impatiently in the garden that day for our neighbours, to communicate to them the happy tidings. At last their voices were heard; we set up the established signal-cry, and our friends were with us instantly. "Oh, did they know what we had to tell! We had got a little sister; a darling little beauty of a sister! We should never care for dolls now; we should give all our dolls away!"

What was our astonishment when Sara said that

she would tell us a secret which their maid had just told her, when the news had come that we had a little sister; and that was, that they too would have one most likely before long! But we were to be certain sure never to tell anybody, for it was a very great secret indeed!

What a strange thing this was! and how delightful, too, that dear little brothers and sisters came so unexpectedly, when one thought about anything but their coming!

The occupation—the charm, of this winter was the baby; but there was a grief in our house nevertheless. Our mother was ill for months—was not able, indeed, to leave her room till spring. The woman who had made her appearance before the time of little Emma's birth, never left us through the whole winter; and true to our volunteered promise, we gave away our large dolls to the little niece of this nurse—a child about whom we became much interested. Her father was a soldier, and had been a prisoner in a horrible French prison for some years; and his wife maintained herself by needlework.

When our mother recovered from her illness, and was again able to pay attention to us, she informed us, to our no small sorrow, that it was no longer her intention to continue our education herself, and that after many plans had been thought of, it was the decision of our father and herself to put us under the care of a lady who was just coming to the town—was in fact coming to lodge at the very next house, where Mrs. Gilbert had lived—and would have the daily care of us.

Of course, we had nothing to say against this; but

long was the discussion which we had between ourselves on the subject. We were as rational as people, either old or young, mostly are in their discussions—we found that there was a deal to be said on both sides. We should lose some liberty, but then there was novelty in going to school; the lady who was to teach us might be cross and disagreeable, but then on the other hand she might be very charming; and seeing that she had been chosen by our parents to instruct us, the probabilities were that she was so. We consulted our friends, the Taylors, on the subject; they said that their mamma, too, was talking a deal now-a-days about schools and governesses. John said he had made up his mind that he should have had to go to school after Christmas, and he wondered he had not—for his part, he should like it; and Sara was generous enough to say, that now we were going to have a governess, she should like to have one too.

One evening, our mother told us that the lady who was to teach us was coming the next day to dine with us. Of course, this was very important information. We should thus see what she was like. Her name, our mother told us, was Parker—Mrs. Parker. What, that Mrs. Parker who had formerly lived at the haunted old Hall? The same. Was it really she! Nanny had told us so much about her—she was the cleverest lady in the world—had written books, knew Latin, and Greek, and botany, and was as learned as a clergyman, and drew and painted! Nanny had seen a large screen which she had painted with flowers—poppies, and anemones, and carnations, and tulips, all scattered about as if some

one had thrown over it a handful of flowers; and Nanny had told us that her history was like a story in a book—was all this true? Our mother said that it was all true. She was indeed the cleverest woman she ever knew, and the most accomplished, and perhaps the best also. She was a lady of good family, and had once been a great deal richer than, in all probability, we should ever be; but she had been very unfortunate—had been connected with people unworthy of her, and she had known much, very much, sorrow. Our mother said that she told us this, not for us to talk about, but that we might feel respect for her, and show her kindness, and endeavour to profit by her very superior mind. Nothing, she said, would give her greater pleasure than for her children to find a friend in Mrs. Parker. We were very much impressed by the earnest manner in which our mother spoke. An ideal of what this lady must resemble filled our minds. To me she seemed a tall figure clothed in white—a sort of beautiful angel, looking wise and kind at the same time. Whilst I was thus imagining the exterior of a being so gifted and so good, the door opened and our mother rose, saying at the same moment—"Mrs. Parker." I looked up; my tall figure in white had vanished, and I saw my mother holding by the hand a rather short, rather broad, rather brown-complexioned woman, dressed in very plain black. This, then, was our future teacher—the model we were to copy—the one whom we were to make our friend! I was a little staggered.

On our mother's introducing us to her, she took a hand of each of us, and looking fixedly into our

faces, smiled kindly and said, "We shall, I trust, be good friends by and by."

We sat down by the table after dinner, and listened to the conversation of Mrs. Parker and our mother; it was a real pleasure to hear them talk. She had been into many parts of the world, and all that she related was lively and graphic; and then, too, when she turned and talked to us, not, like a formal governess, about multiplication tables and the conjugation of irregular verbs, but about flowers and pleasant books—how she recommended herself to our hearts! She looked at Anna's flower-drawings, and commended them; and said that we would all walk together in summer evenings and gather flowers, which she would teach us to press, and to imitate also—not by the pencil alone, but to make artificially. She told us of the wonders which the microscope revealed—of which we knew but little—and all she told us had such a clearness that it seemed to us as if we could see and understand at once all that she described. There was, too, something so gentle and kind about her—so love-inspiring, that I found, after all, my lofty white-garmented figure was right in spirit, if not in outward form.

We were charmed with our new teacher; the impression on both was the same. We were quite enraptured to find how much alike our sentiments were regarding her. Nanny had a deal of trouble to get us to bed that night; we were so eager looking up school-books, and paint-boxes, and slates, and pencils, that we might be ready to begin.

"A new broom sweeps clean," said Nanny, almost angrily; "take my word for it, that you 'll be sick of

school, spite of all this flower-painting and flower-making, before you are a month older!"

At the appointed time, we began our school-life in earnest; but yet that earnest was not downright hard drudgery after all. As far as learning went, we were put into Mrs. Parker's hands, and she was to do with us as she would. The mere learning was not amiss; but the really pleasant thing was when we had Mrs. Parker to ourselves, out of the regular school-hours, and when there was no formal teaching; when she took us out into the fields, and talked about whatever might present itself. I never heard any one talk as well as she did; she would take a little flower in her hand, and preach such a sermon from it as would make the hearts of her young auditors burn within them. She saw the love which we had for nature; she had it too, and she sympathized with us. Seeing, too, the ardency of our minds, she gave us, young as we were, an aim to our desires. She, noble-minded woman, sowed seed at that time which has sprung up since then to bear, I trust, not bad fruit. She called forth the peculiar faculties of our minds, and gave them a bent which they never lost.

Our mother was greatly pleased with the influence which she soon acquired over us; and she had her wish in seeing her become the friend of her children.

From this time, for two years and a half, we were under the care of this excellent woman. My heart glows with love to her memory as I write this page. How beautiful is the character of such a woman! It seems to me, on reviewing it, as if all graces of mind and heart were combined in her—intellect, accomplishments, amiability, piety. So humble, yet so

gifted—having suffered so much from others, yet full of love and kindness to all. Her memory is to me a sacred thing. I keep yet the little drawings which she made me, little exquisite groups of flowers which she cut out, and the letters which, when we left home for a distant school, she wrote to me. Yes, indeed, it was a happy day when we were put under her care; and Nanny's prediction was triumphantly proved wrong—that we should be tired of school before we had gone there for a month.

In the early spring, as had been predicted, our neighbours also had a little sister; and just about the same time, the young Shepperleys had a little brother. Whilst our mother, as the warmer months of spring advanced, only slowly recovered, Mrs. Shepperley was quite well, and was driving about and looking as gay as ever. As usual, she paid us occasional visits; and never failed to bring tidings of one kind or another that vexed us. Her little boy, she said, would make two of ours, though he was so much younger. She evidently looked down upon our baby; and her dissentient opinion annoyed us more than other people's praise gave us pleasure.

CHAPTER X.

VARIOUS THINGS.

Our father, as I have before said, had a perfect passion for improving things and places; and, having now done the best he could for the present to his own individual possessions, he began to turn his mind to

the improvement of the town. The town was wretchedly paved, and the streets were full of the most awkward projections and irregularities; there were no lamps, there was a pinfold in the town-streets, and the inhabitants were indifferently supplied with water, whilst the finest of streams ran idly by the town. All these things suggested to his mind the design of improving and benefiting the place. He formed plans and made suggestions; he talked with all his friends and acquaintances about them, and everybody acknowledged how desirable it was that these things should be done, but where was the man with public spirit enough to see after their being done? Would *he* do it? He was one, the whole town declared, in whom everybody had confidence; if he would but undertake it, the necessary funds should be raised, and he should be empowered to carry out all his designs. He undertook the office willingly; and now, through all this midsummer, nothing was thought of or talked of but improving the town. The work went on rapidly under our father's eye; unsightly objects were done away with; regular pavements were laid down; lamps hung here and there; old deformities and obstacles removed, and corners, which hitherto had been nothing but nuisances, were given up to the adjoining inhabitant to add to his garden or his court. In the prevailing spirit of the time, people built up new walls or put down new palisades. The aspect of everything improved daily. People looked on with surprise; they called our father the public benefactor—the most public-spirited man of the place. To him it was a labour of love, and his best reward was

now to see the approbation which his work was winning.

To us at home, too, all was equally satisfactory. Our neighbours were as charming as ever, although neither they nor we had as much time to play this year as the last. Both they and we had our daily lessons to do; and they were as much delighted with their little Mary Ann as we with our little idol, Emma.

Of the Shepperleys we saw less and less. They had gained the intimate acquaintance of a great many people, and had enough to do without having much time to spare for us. Nanny maintained her old opinions of them and her old dislike, and dropped many hints of the mischief they were doing in many ways. That, however, which perhaps annoyed us the most, was the undeniable fact that the young Master Shepperley was unquestionably a finer baby than either ours or the Taylors';—for the first time in my life I felt the bitter feeling of envy and dislike. I hated to see their nurse come to our house with their baby, and more than all to hear the nurse —who seemed to have the spirit of her mistress— draw invidious comparisons between the children.

"A great, heavy, lumpish thing is that Shepperleys' baby," said Nanny, who was influenced by a spirit of malice, "it will go off with the croup or the hooping-cough; and good riddance of it!"

"Oh Nanny!" we said, "it is not right to say so." And yet, I am afraid that we ourselves were not in the most Christian state of mind.

It was about this time that we first read Robinson Crusoe, and Sandford and Merton. They made quite

an era in our knowledge of books; they were the most interesting that we had ever read, and we were never satisfied with the reading of them. Again and again we went through them, and found new beauties each time. Our friends, the Taylors, read them too; but on them, who had already been acquainted with works of fiction, the effect which they produced was less vivid. The next delight in our experience of books was in "Evenings at Home." The little dramatic sketches in these volumes had an inconceivable charm for us; they placed everything so livingly before our imaginations. We soon knew by heart "Alfred in the Neat-herd's Cottage," and "Canute and his Courtiers;" and enacted them, as we thought, with all the spirit of actuality. It was about this time, too, when we began to compose little poems, and relate, rather than write, tales in prose. Many were the histories of joy and sorrow, according to our small experience of life, which we thus put together—telling them over, night after night, till they were made as complete as we thought them capable of being. It was not till three or four years later that we were able to commit our effusions to paper; and then they ceased to be joint labours.

One afternoon this summer, we had been out with Nanny and our darling Emma. She was now a sweet little blue-eyed creature, with a grave little mouth, that relaxed all at once into a sunny smile, with yellowish silken hair, and a complexion like alabaster. Oh, how we loved her! Our father and mother, too, had taken a drive that afternoon, and we were all to be home again to tea at seven. We were a little after our time; and when we returned,

we were surprised by the group that was sitting under the trees in the garden: there were our parents, our grandfather, who had now been but poorly for some time, and had now surprised us with a visit; and an old, very old man, with long hair literally as white as snow, in a sort of picturesque dress, half like a beggar's, but, at the same time, more respectable than any beggar we had ever seen. Refreshments stood on a little table beside them, and of so solid a character, that we could see they had been brought out principally with reference to the old man.

"And, Peter," said our grandfather, as we came up to, and stood beside the group, "what do you say of your daughter, Mary Clare?"

The old man did not raise his head to reply; it maintained still its stooping position, but he lifted his eyes to the speaker, causing thereby dozens, at least, of parallel wrinkles to stretch across his forehead. His hands, clasped together, rested on his stick, which was firmly planted between his knees; and with a low and very agreeable voice, he thus replied—

"My daughter Mary—yes, she was one in ten thousand. After our misfortunes, she it was that maintained us. She nursed her mother in the fever, and buried her. I had as good as lost all my powers; my all was gone—my bit of property, that I'd laboured for for years; and it made me, body and mind, as weak as a child! I never shed a tear when my wife died; it cuts a man up sadly when he loses his all! Mary put herself to a dress-maker in the town, and worked night and day—she pleased the ladies, and she got a power of money. I had a bit

of land from old Squire Griffin—you knew the old squire?" said he, addressing my grandfather. The old gentleman assented, and he continued—"Well, the old squire would have no nay, but I must have a bit of land under him, and a nice house, and I sent for my daughter to come and live with me; it was not above a mile from the town, and I thought she could do her work all as one. She went backwards and forwards, and then I found out that the young squire was after her. 'This will never do,' says I; 'he a gentleman born, and my daughter without a penny—he's after her for no good.' So I told her I'd have no such goings on; and if she kept company with the young squire, who meant her no good, I'd never own her for a daughter of mine. On this, what does she do but tell every word of it to the young squire; and he comes to me—'Peter Clare,' says he, 'as I'm a living man, I'll marry Mary!' 'And what will your father, Squire Griffin, say?' says I. 'He may say what he pleases,' says the young squire; 'he married to please himself, and I'll marry to please myself!' 'Mr. Griffin,' says I, 'your father has been the best friend I ever had, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go to-morrow morning to him and tell him what you're after. He shall never fling it at me that I acted in any underhand way—my living depends upon him, and I won't see the wrong thing done by him!' On this the young squire began to talk, and Mary fell a-crying; but it did not move me a bit. 'I know what's right,' said I, 'and a team of horses shall never turn me.' The young squire begged me to alter my mind; and then he got into a great rage, and swore; and so, at last, I

ordered him off; and the next morning, as I had said, I sets off straight to his father. The old squire was a late lier in bed, so I was had up into his room, and I told him all my business as he sat up in bed. 'You 've behaved like an honest man, Peter,' says he, 'and you shall never repent of it; I'll send my son out of the way, and you get your daughter married. I 'll give two hundred pounds with her any day; she's a likely young woman, and I'll remember you, Peter, in my will!'

"I thought I had done a good morning's work, and I went home with a good appetite—we'd beans and bacon for dinner that day, I remember—capital beans and bacon, and Mary helped me as if nothing had happened; but I could not help noticing that she put one bean into her mouth, and that was all the dinner that she had.

"Well, the young squire was sent off to London; and the gardener from a hall, a decentish sort of chap, paid his addresses to Mary. Not a word would she say to him—not one single word. 'No,' says she, 'Thomas Smith, I 'll never marry you; my heart is another's, and I am not ashamed of saying it; and if I do not marry him I 'll die as I am!'

"I urged and urged, but it was no manner of use. She made no complaints; she went to her work just as usual. Twice on a Sunday she went to church, and twice in the week to prayers; she was a good Christian—that she was! I 'd done my duty by her, and I had done my duty by the old squire; so I went on with my farming, and did not trouble my head about anything else. One thing, however, I could

not help seeing: there comes a young chap twice a-week or so to see Mary. 'It 's some of those fine town chaps come after her,' thinks I. 'She 'll be marrying him some of these days.' But I never says a word to her; because, after the young squire was gone, she had made me promise never to speak to her about marrying; and as she was so dutiful to me, the least I could do was to humour her in her own way.

"'This is some young chap as has a notion of her,' says I, one day, to a neighbour. 'Lord, Peter,' says she, 'it 's the doctor. Don't you see as how she is dropping into the grave?' I had never thought of such a thing!" said Peter, with something like emotion; "so I hurries home and says, point blank, 'Why, Mary, are you badly?' 'You have been the death of me,' says she, laying her hand on her heart; and from that time she wasted away like a shadow. But she looked after the house to the last.

"On the very day before her death, the old squire was found dead in his bed. But he had never remembered me in his will—not he! and when the young squire came back again, as he did the moment he heard of his father's death, the first thing he does was to send me a discharge. I must leave my little farm the very next quarter. He had not a bit of consideration for me!—out I must go to the day. 'He 's a hard-hearted old brute,' says he, to a neighbour I sent to him, 'and he may die in a ditch for what I care!'

"Oh, I 've been hardly used," said old Peter, "very hardly used. The barest value given for my

crops—all my things sold up by auction. I had not ten pounds in my pocket when I left—and all this because I did my duty!

"A fine gravestone the young squire put up on Mary's grave, and they tell me now he still wears mourning for her: but I 've been hardly used—very hardly; and all because I did my duty!"

When the old man had ended his story, they pressed him to eat more, but he refused; and then our father gave him half-a-crown for his night's lodging, our grandfather shook hands with him, and he departed. When he was gone, they all began to talk over his story. My grandfather said that Peter had done quite right, and that he himself would have done just the same; our father and mother said that Peter was wrong; that his daughter was the victim of his obstinacy; and that, in great degree, he had merited the trouble that came upon him. Our mother wiped her eyes as she spoke of Mary, and said that Peter really was a hard-hearted, selfish old fellow. Our grandfather was irritated by these words: he defended Peter warmly, and grew quite angry. He was anything but well when he came to us, and his anger brought on such a violent fit of coughing, that we were all quite frightened. After the fit was over he was quite exhausted; but for all that, he got up and said he would go. Our mother begged him to stay all night, but he would not; he was quite resolutely bent upon going home. Our father wished to drive him in the gig, but neither would he hear of that; so our father went home with him, which he reached only with great difficulty.

This was the last time that our grandfather came

to see us. He was not, however, during the remainder of his life, ever confined to his bed; and to the very last he busied himself about his snuffs and his patients. In the autumn he died; nor did old Peter Clare ever again make his appearance.

CHAPTER XI.

RUMOURS AND TROUBLES.

In twelve months' time from the period when our father first began to busy himself about the beautifying and improving of the town, the result of his labours became very evident indeed. A considerable sum of money had been collected for the purpose, but much more than this had been expended. Our mother, who was not as sanguine about these things as our father, had warned him long ago to undertake no more improvements, however desirable, than his funds would accomplish; but one who enters as zealously into any scheme as he did into this, is not to be easily deterred by considerations of cold prudence. Things must not be left incomplete—he should never do justice to his own plans if he were to do so; and if he were now to stop, who would accomplish the work in the same spirit, or, indeed, would it ever get done at all? The truth was, that our father really liked his job; and had he even known that he must lose money by it, he would have gone on.

The public, at first, were extremely enthusiastic about it—the universal feeling was with him. In

the course of the second year, however (and certainly there were evidences of it before that time), a spirit of discontent and fault-finding was beginning to creep in. Those who had had awkward encroachments taken away, wanted remuneration. They complained that they were losers; whilst others, perhaps their very next door neighbours, had gained a little angle of land, which they had added to their garden or otherwise made use of: grumblers started up here and there, who saw no advantage in these changes—people had walked for generations on the old rough pavements, and they did not see that the new ones were much better—a deal of money was laid out, but they did not mean to be at any more expense about it, &c., &c. Our father was annoyed greatly as these things came to his ears; our mother was indignant. "It's those Shepperleys," said Nanny. "I know it's them—insinivating, talking people, as they are!"

Nanny was not wrong. Presently a paper got into circulation, meant to be witty, but without a grain of wit in it, having reference to our father and his improvements: he had been draining the town—his next move was to drain the pockets of the town. It was a vulgar, malicious effusion, but it fulfilled its purpose—it pleased the discontented, and wounded our father deeply: he said, in the bitterness of his heart, that he would do no more for the public. Probably he, too, suspected Mr. Shepperley who never came now to the house, nor, indeed, did any of the family. He had taken a nice place in the neighbourhood, where he had commenced as amateur farmer. He had the greatest influence over some of the first

people in the place and neighbourhood; and, as regarded our family, his influence was decidedly unfriendly. One evening we were all together; little Emma was amusing herself on the floor, and we were amusing ourselves by watching her. Our father had been reading aloud to our mother, and had just laid down his book to talk of another little scheme he was beginning to be interested in, and by which he hoped to divert his mind from the growing annoyances of his town-improvements; and that was a sort of miniature tillage-farm, which he had at this time on his hands. There was a field of wheat, a field of turnips, and a field of flax, besides a considerable quantity of land to be mowed for hay. He fancied that it would afford some profit; he was quite sure it would afford him pleasure, and he was fond of talking of it. We should eat bread this next autumn of our own corn; from this time forth we would keep a cow—the children should have plenty of new milk—he was quite in love with his little scheme. In the midst of all this, our neighbour, Mr. Taylor, came in; he was full of news, as was very evident the first moment he entered the room.

"Well, sir," said he, "have you heard what your friend Shepperley's about?" "What, then, that malicious paper is his doing, is it?" asked our father, supposing it had reference to that. "No doubt of it," returned Mr. Taylor; "and a dirty, disgraceful piece of business it is. But that's not what I mean; I mean with reference to this piece of land here."

Our father fairly started. "What, has he been tampering with Hollins about that land—what is that land to him?" "Very true," said Mr. Taylor;

"and nothing but the merest malice in the world could make him do it."

"Do what?" said our father; "has he bought the land?" "Bought it, or got it on lease, or something of the kind. They say that he is going to build an inn there!"

"An inn!" exclaimed our father and mother in the same voice. Whilst they were almost stunned by this idea, old Captain Buckstone came in. He, too, came full of the same subject. "Is it actually true?" he began, almost before salutations were ended, and looking out into our garden at the same time; "is it actually true that that fellow, Shepperley, is going to block up your pretty view here? I thought he was a friend of yours, eh?"

"I never heard a word of it till this moment," said our father, "when our friend, Mr. Taylor, here, has brought us the news." "They say that he is going to build a windmill," said old Captain Buckstone.

"A windmill!" ejaculated our parents again together.

"He 's an artful, interloping, brazen-faced scoundrel," said the captain, vehemently. "What the devil must he bring his windmills here for! why, he 'll shut out every bit of view."

Our father almost groaned. "Windmill!" said Mr. Taylor. "No: I tell you it is an inn that he is going to build."

A knock at the door announced other visitors; and the next moment in came Miss Brandon. "I am so sorry to bring disagreeable news," she began; but, really, by the eagerness all our acquaintance showed about it, one might suppose it was the most pleasant

thing in the world. "I really am sorry to tell anything unpleasant, but it is my honest opinion that something ought to be done; for Mr. Shepperley, they say, is going to horse the new coach, and is going to build great stables just by you, in Mr. Hollins's ground—just by your garden; and stables are such a nuisance! You could not bear to sit in these sweet, pretty rooms, if the stables came so near you, say nothing of walking in the garden; and I seriously think that you should do something. It 's a vile, a most malicious thing; and I 'll never say different. Mr. Shepperley, to be sure, has his friends in the town, who can see no harm in what he does: and Mrs. Shepperley may be a very charming person; but, for all that, you are an old and most respectable neighbour; and after what you have done for the town, I must say, people ought to know better than side with Mr. Shepperley in any of his dirty, little malicious tricks."

Miss Brandon was a great talker, and left no room for anybody to say one word—our parents, indeed, seemed to have no mind to say anything—this information was quite overwhelming. Neither Captain Buckstone nor Mr. Taylor said anything either; and Miss Brandon, finding that she had the field all to herself, went on, but this time addressed herself to the two visitors—"And I do really think, that one of you two gentlemen ought to interfere; for Mr. Shepperley is one of those persons who must be made to feel the length of his tether; and as long as he thinks that he can carry everything his own way, and that people will applaud everything he does—he 'll stick at nothing; but once let the gentlemen of the town

come forward and say, 'It 's a very ungentlemanly and unhandsome thing that you are doing, Mr. Shepperley,' then he would stop, for he would not risk public opinion. You see there are so many discontented people in the place, who, for their little petty spite because they have had their door-scrapers taken out of the middle of the footpath, where they tripped everybody up, and tore endless ladies' gowns, and have had them set down decently, where they can hurt nobody; for which, I am sure, we are all of us very much obliged to our friend here—these people, I say, side with Mr. Shepperley, and make him think that whatever he does is right: and one must confess, that it is an unfortunate thing that anybody should have anything against our friend just at this time; and, therefore, I hope you gentlemen will take it in hand, and let Mr. Shepperley know that everybody of any respectability in the place would think his building stables here a most ill-natured and dirty trick—as I 'm sure you gentlemen would if it came home to yourselves, for stables are the most horrid nuisance near a place. They fill the air with a nasty, stinging effluvia, as bad as any poison, and there is no getting rid of it do what you will; and it 's bad for the health:—how could these dear little loves ever keep their rosy cheeks, with a nasty, pestilent smell of stables for ever in the air!"

Our poor mother could bear it no longer; she fairly started up—so did everybody—Captain Buckstone and Mr. Taylor both exclaiming in the same voice —"It is not stables, Miss Brandon, that he is going to build."—"It is an inn."—"It is a windmill."—"A respectable inn."—"A windmill, a windmill, and

that 's not unhealthy."—" Though an inn might bring its nuisance."—" Though a windmill is not the thing one should like standing in one's garden." Thus they talked together, their conversation being very much like a cord twisted of two colours.

Spite of all Miss Brandon's suggestions that one of these gentlemen should interfere, they neither of them seemed willing to take the office on themselves —they said that, after all, it might be only rumour; they should think it was—they did not believe anybody would actually be so malicious—people always took the alarm so soon; and that they hoped our parents need not seriously agitate themselves, for it was time enough to do so when the thing was done.

Our parents were, however, very uneasy, as well they might be. Here had they made their home, as they thought, so complete; they only wanted one thing more to make it perfect, and now that one thing was going to be taken from them and turned to the very purpose which would destroy the worth of all the rest, and that by the person whom they had received here kindly—had done everything for; and perhaps in their good-heartedness, openness, and confidence in him, they themselves had furnished him with this most cruel weapon of annoyance. We children heard all that was said: our father's distress cut us to the very heart, and, like Nanny, we were unbounded in our vehement outbreak of indignation.

But news about the Shepperleys did not soon come to an end. Our parents, who knew something of Mr. Shepperley's private circumstances, had said that it was to them incomprehensible how the Shepperleys could go on in the course which they seemed

to have begun. It was not long, however, before this mystery was solved, and people brought to us the news which solved it, as they had done the news which had so annoyed us. Mr. Shepperley had won the fourth of a twenty thousand pound prize in the lottery. It matters not how money comes to a person if money there only be. Money, alas, too frequently, in the vocabulary of the world, means merit, and these five thousand pounds worked wonderfully on the minds of many of our good townspeople. Our father said, in the sickness of his heart, that, having so far completed his projected public improvements, he would stop; and, abiding by the loss, he would leave anything further to those who were ambitious of the most thankless office—the pleasing of the many. Mr. Shepperley at this moment stepped forward and offered himself as the servant of the public; he projected this and that, schemes of magnificent things; the people should be shareholders in all that he undertook, and everybody should have abundant interest for their money. It was a very sore subject to our father: and, in the meantime, we soon found that there was some truth in the rumour regarding that adjoining piece of land. He had taken it on a lease—a thing which our father had never succeeded in doing, but what he was intending to do with it was at present a mystery; the only direct operations which took place in it were, the planting a row of willow trees at the bottom on the edge of a little watercourse, and within these, and up the side of our garden, a row of fir-trees. That he meant to block out our view, our poor father's favourite view, was

evident; but trees were not so unsightly as buildings of any kind—so, though they were like a thorn in his heart every time he saw them, and he could not help seeing them, still, as they were so much better than he had dreaded, and while they were little they were not any great detriment, he tried to disregard them. Our mother often said, "Do not distress yourself about Mr. Shepperley, for it is my firm persuasion that he cannot long go on in this way: people will see through him; conduct like his will never bring a blessing with it; and a time will come when people will see how much more a real public benefactor and friend you have been than he!"

Nanny threatened to pour boiling water to the roots of all his trees; and very probably she would have done so had not we, to her great indignation, betrayed her, and thus caused a prohibition to anything of that kind from our father.

CHAPTER XII.

SUMMER TIME, AND JOY AT HOME.

Our father took the most lively interest now in his little tillage farm. The season was a most propitious one; rain came just when it was wanted, and fell in just the proper quantities, and all the rest of the spring and summer was blooming, sunny weather. We were never tired with going with our father to see the growth of his fields. The walk thither was the most charming in the world; we

either went through the loveliest old pasture fields, all the way going from our own garden across the meadow, and up our own hilly fields; or else a little way round by an old woodland lane, the most picturesque of its kind. In wet seasons, or in winter, this lane was almost impassable, for it lay deep below its banks, and a little gurgling stream, that ran first on one side of it and then on the other, crossing it here and there in the most wanton sort of way, at such times overflowed it; but now it was confined within its own little stony bed, and trailing plants, which love watery situations, hung fantastically over its banks, dipping their lovely green sprays down into the water as if to drink, or to show how beautifully transparent the water was. There was the golden saxifrage, with its exquisite flowers, like the setting of a jewel; there was the evergreen periwinkle, with its blue and white blossoms, and its myrtle-like foliage. Starwort, and pink campions, and ragged robins, and blue robin-run-in-the-hedge, on the dryer banks; old mossy crab trees bent in crooked ruggedness half across the lane; and a succession of oak-trees, venerable and gnarled timber-trees, of the most picturesque forms and woodland character, cast a green and pleasant shade over the whole way. Beside the trees, and the plants, and the little gurgling brook, there were other objects peculiar to this lane which we soon discovered, and which were of an inexhaustible interest. Among the stones of the water-course, particularly where it had shrunk by the dryness of the season, we found great numbers of small fossil-stones; and among the broken limestone of which the stony ground was composed, we

found small glittering crystals, which we flattered ourselves were diamonds of inestimable value. There was not a lane anywhere in the neighbourhood that afforded such wonders and such treasures as this. Of course, this was our favourite way of going to our father's fields, which, from this very lane, were called the Timber-lane fields. Our father's favourite way, on the contrary, was by the open and more airy fields; and this way, particularly in returning, the view was extremely fine, extending over the finest woodland district to the barren and bleak hills of the north of the country, or the moorlands, as they were called; which was, in fact, a continuous range of hills with the Peak of Derbyshire. Our father had a great taste and delight in landscape scenery on a large or small scale, and hence it was natural that he found so much pleasure in this road. But he indulged us, nevertheless, very often by going through the lane, and we in our turn never objected to the fields.

At the top of the lane was a small white cottage, inhabited by a day-labourer and his family. There were the sturdy, brown-complexioned father and mother, in their fustian and home-spun habiliments, and seven or eight hardy, sunburnt, and weather-beaten children, the boys in coarse corduroy, and the girls in frocks and pinafores of coarse blue, or olive-green cotton. Dusty-looking hens, and broods of well-grown chickens, scratched and pecked about the door; a pale-coloured tortoiseshell cat sat on the window-sill; a little pig grunted in a sty at the end of the house; potatoes, and cabbages, and onions throve vigorously in the garden; and the little cottage

chimney sent up its curling blue smoke, night and morning, through the scrambling damson-trees that grew round the house. It was a picture of quiet, humble contentment, that our father did not fail to point out to us the first time we went this way with him; and ever afterwards it presented itself to us as one of the pleasant features of the place.

The labourer was named Ward; he was a sober, hard-working man, and was fully employed by our father. This led us frequently to go to the cottage. In the hay-time, the wife and the bigger children worked too; our father worked, and so did we. I have not words to tell the delight of that time. Our dinners were sent up to us in a great basket from home, and excellent those dinners always seemed to be. We sat down on the grass, or on the hay, in some shady place, to eat; and when we had done, we gave the abundant remains to the labourer's wife and her children. It was a great happiness to us to see how they always enjoyed it; nor were we at all too grand to play and amuse ourselves with the labourer's children. They were good-natured and well behaved, and were proficients in all the accomplishments of their class. They made wonderful things out of rushes—grenadiers' caps, and curious baskets of them in their green state; and when peeled they pasted them, not without a certain degree of rustic taste, in regular patterns on the outside of little boxes made of coarse pasteboard, which we, in those days, thought very pretty, and were glad enough to imitate. They peeled willow sticks in patterns, making a spiral line run up the stick, or even to give it the effect of an

interlacing. It was a new sort of life to us, and pleased us very much.

The hay-harvest was finished, and now came a few weeks' intermission before the corn-harvest was ready; and in those few weeks that memorable family event occurred to which I before slightly alluded.

We were asleep in our beds one morning in July, when Nanny, apparently having rushed up to our beds, shook us, as it seemed to us, violently, and shouted something which at first appeared unintelligible to us. In a moment or two, however, we understood it—a little brother was born! We actually and truly had now a little brother! What an amazing, what a joyful announcement—a brother! —a brother! There was something quite ecstatic in the idea; we could not this time stay to dress ourselves; off we flew in our little night-dresses, spite of all that Nanny could say, and burst into our mother's chamber.

"Oh, hush! hush! pray ye, hush!" said the same old woman who was here at little Emma's birth.

"Oh, mother, have we really got a little brother?" we exclaimed.

Our mother, who seemed not so ill as before, said "Yes," and in such a joyful tone, that we climbed to the pillow and kissed her.

"Oh, bless me! bless me!" said the old woman, almost wringing her hands, "you'll kill missis and the baby, as sure as I'm alive!"

"Kill the baby!" we exclaimed; "never."

But she pushed us away, and seemed quite excited;

and then, putting the bed-clothes aside, out she brought a little, soft, warm bundle, that seemed made up of flannel, and, sitting down, bade us come to her, for there would, she said, be no peace till we had seen the baby. She opened the flannels, and what a baby it was!—a fine, round-faced, plump fellow, that directly opened his eyes—his large, dark eyes—and looked round him as knowing as an old man.

"Oh, what a beauty he is!—what a darling he is!" we exclaimed, and never forgot that we said *he* all the time. Indeed it was remarkable, as regarded all the family, that they never spoke of the baby as *it*, but *he;* and that showed plainly enough how much set-up everybody was with this first son of the house.

"And has our father seen him?" we demanded.

Oh, to be sure he had; and he was as much pleased as we were. And where was he? Down stairs. Down stairs, then, we ran, in our night-things still, and into the parlour where our father sat. He was neither reading nor writing, but sat in his chair as if in deep thought. When we rushed into the room, he opened his arms and received us both to his bosom. He said nothing, nor did we; for, on looking into his face, we saw that his eyes were full of tears. The next moment, however, he wiped his eyes, and said, in a voice low with deep emotion, "The Almighty has been very good to us this night, my children. You have seen the brother which he has given to you?"

We replied to him with the most unbounded joy, but our father was grave and quiet, and, as if troubled by our noisy spirit, bade us go and dress and come down to breakfast.

When we came down, we found our father almost as gay as ourselves; he said that he had to go out on business that day into the country, to a curious old place, and that he would take us with him, both of us, in the gig. This was, indeed, a delight, although we were a little sorry to leave the house, which contained such a new and extraordinary treasure. In an hour or two we set off. Of course, we talked a deal about the new brother, who, our father informed us, was to be called Charles, after our mother's father, who was a singularly excellent man, as we already knew. The name pleased us; and I am sure that, had we received that morning a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds, we should, none of us, have felt happier or prouder than we did.

After we had talked for a long time of the brother, our father told us that we were going to Caverswall Castle, an old moated house, which was about to be purchased by some rich Catholics, who were refugees from France, and was to become immediately a nunnery. He was employed by one of the parties, and thus was going over on business. A most interesting thing this was: we had a dim sort of an idea of what Catholics were—*papists* we had also heard them called; and when so called, we always thought of bloody Queen Mary, and the faggot, and the rack. We thought, too, of those "dark ages of papacy," of which we had heard our father speak, and which always had impressed upon my mind an idea of the daylight itself being dim then—a sort of natural obscuration over everything; I had not then taken into my mind the idea of a moral darkness. However, our father did not talk

of these people as *papists*, but as *Catholics*, as refugee Catholics; and we instantly had the greatest regard for them, as being persecuted by that arch tormentor, Buonaparte.

We reached the handsome old mansion, with its corner towers, its moat, and its drawbridge. We rattled under the heavy arched gateway into the court-yard, and then a barking, as it seemed, of at least twenty dogs, large and small, saluted us. The next moment out came a servant, and then a rosy-faced, good-tempered, stout gentleman-farmer, who received our father with the warmest cordiality.

"These are my little daughters," said our father, presenting us, "whom I have taken the liberty of bringing with me for a day's pleasure."

That was quite right, the gentleman-farmer said, quite right, and the most friendly thing our father could have done; he, the gentleman-farmer, would find us plenty of playfellows; and so saying, he led us all in, and then, opening a door, introduced us at once into a large and cheerful parlour, where sat a lady and three or four little girls at their work and lessons. This was Mrs. Tidesmore, the wife of the gentleman-farmer, and these were to be our playfellows for the day. Refreshments were ordered in, and we were sent upstairs with two of the little girls to take off our things. Our first words to them, when we were alone together, were, "Oh, do you know we have got a little brother?"

The girls stared and laughed. "Oh!" said they, almost disdainfully, "we have got six!"

The momentary sensation occasioned in us by this reply was something like the shock of sitting down

and finding the chair lower than you expected. We took off our things in silence, and felt as if we should say no more about our little brother.

When, however, we came down stairs, the mother of the children met us with the most smiling face in the world; and giving a hand to each, said, "And so, my dears, you have got a new little brother, for the first time, this morning, have you? Come, you must tell me all about it. Is it a pretty baby?—but of course it is!"

We glanced triumphantly at the two girls who had despised the idea of a brother, and burst forth into the most rapturous description of this interesting little stranger.

But Mrs. Tidesmore, good-natured lady as she was, could not listen to us all the morning; so, when we seemed to have finished eating, she sent us out with her four little girls to amuse ourselves. There was a deal both to amuse and to interest us; the vastness and singularity of the building, the lovely garden, the paved court, the drawbridge and the moat—they all stirred that incipient poetry within us, and that love of the picturesque, which was already beginning to be a passion as well as a feeling. The girls were as much pleased with us as we with them; they wished a hundred times that we only lived near to them, and could come and see them often. They took us to the moat, and then gently pulling us back, told us how, when they came here first, three or four years ago, shortly after their coming, a little brother of theirs, named George, had fallen in and been drowned. Nobody knew where he was; the parents supposed him playing with the

other children; the children supposed him with the parents, and thus he had been dead an hour or two before he was found, or even, perhaps, before he was missed. Poor little George! and then they told anecdotes of him which made us cry—for to us the loss of a brother seemed the greatest loss in the world. Ah! our sorrow in that way came many years later; and it was bitter, indeed, when it came!

Talking of little George's death, nothing was so natural as that we should go and see his grave. The church and the churchyard were close to the garden. They showed us the little grave, with its stone and epitaph—

> "Weep not for me, my parents dear,
> I am not dead, but sleeping here,
> A living flower, that shall expand
> Its beauty in the heavenly land."

It was, the children said, a long time after little George's death before their mother could bear the place. She was so timid that she hardly could bear the children out of her sight; she was even so now to a certain extent, and she would, they believed, be very glad to leave the place. From the churchyard of course we went into the church; looked at all the monuments; sat in the Tidesmores' pew; mounted into the pulpit; and finally pulled the bells, finding every one of these feats exceedingly amusing. We all of us laughed excessively; laughed so much, or rather wrought ourselves up to such a frenzy of laughter, that when we looked into each other's faces, we burst out laughing again till we bent double, as if there was something irresistibly comic about every one of us. By the churchyard gate there

lived in a cottage a poor idiot; he was a doleful object, and sat on a chair in the sun chewing straws; anybody to have seen us would have thought us a set of the most unfeeling little wretches; and yet we were every one of us very sorry for this poor creature—for scarcely had we turned our backs upon him, than we all burst out a-laughing.

"It's very foolish to laugh so!" said Eliza Tidesmore, and then she fell a-laughing again.

"It would be such a shocking thing," said little Harriet, in a moralising tone, "if any of us should be struck so;" and then she herself laughed, laughed more than anybody else, till the very tears ran down her cheeks.

If any very sour-tempered or impatient people had been with us, we should some of us, perhaps, have been beaten for our senseless folly; as it was, we laughed it out, agreeing, when the fit was over, that it was very foolish, and that one always felt very much tired afterwards. We compared our experience in many other things, and found, to our great astonishment, that we all felt very much alike in all cases. All had felt the same uncomfortable bashfulness creep over one, the moment one was urged to speak to a stranger, till at last one felt a tingling redness flush the tips of one's ears and to the very roots of one's hair; and then one would rather cry than speak. We all knew how unpleasantly exciting it was when people pretended to think one was boys, or called one names, as Tom-boy, or Twopenny-ha'penny, or anything of that sort—or more than that, when elder people, one's parents' acquaintance, or one's nurse-maid, told before one something which

one had said, either very knowing or very silly ; and one begged and prayed that they would not tell it, and they *would,* spite of all your prayers ; and the more one prayed the louder they told it. How angry it made one feel, and how one was ready to knock them down if one could ! We all agreed in saying how hateful and how irritating it was to be taunted in any way—to be sent out of the way that people might talk secrets, or that people should try to deceive one, when one knew all the time the truth as well as they did; and was it not telling stories in them to do so? We were sure that all such wilful deceits would be called stories by *them* if *we* practised them. It would have done anybody, who had any rational sense, good to have heard us talk, for we all agreed that "grown people" often did not know how to treat children. They thought them fools, whereas they had about as much sense as most people ; and we were sure that children would not be called naughty half as often as they were, if people would not be so conceited about their own wisdom, but would give children credit for wishing and meaning to do right, and would be silent when they begged and prayed them so earnestly to be so. Of course we all excepted our own parents, but then one could not always be with one's own parents, and so these annoyances came.

After dinner we went up into the curious little chambers in the corner towers, and out upon the leaden roof, with its heavy stone balustrade. Here, of course, we cut our names, and marked the shape of our feet ; and here we were joined by the two boys of the family who were at home, and now were

come from the daily school. The others were at school at a distance. These boys were right good fellows; and with them we all went to eat cherries, which they gathered from the trees. And then we had tea and must take our leave. It was the happiest day we had almost ever spent. We kissed our friends, and our friends and their mother kissed us. We said that, of all things in the world, we should like to see one another often. But children, like everybody else, must submit to fate. They left Caverswall Castle, the nuns came, and we never met again.

It is now more than thirty years ago, and those girls, most probably, are wives and mothers. It is not impossible but that they may unexpectedly find in these pages this chronicle of a day which they made so agreeable. I trust this recognition of old times, and probably a forgotten playfellow of one day, may be pleasant to them.

CHAPTER XIII.

DAYS IN AUTUMN.

The baby, the brother, the darling little Charles! He grew every day more and more the delight of the house; it was such a fine time of the year when he came into the world, and he was so strong and healthy that he began to go out almost immediately. As if he had been the first child of the family, nothing was thought good enough for him; he had the prettiest hat and cloak that money could buy,

and we all watched him being carried out in the nurse's arms, as if we had been so many proud mothers. The nurse, too, never returned home without bringing word how everybody had said that he was the loveliest baby they ever set eyes on. Nanny, who was little Emma's nurse, not seldom looked out of humour; she said that the "new-comer had put little Emma's nose out of joint," and that none of us now cared anything about her. That, however, of course, was quite wrong; we loved her as well as ever; she was becoming every day more and more interesting; she could now run about, and in her small way talk a little; but I must confess that, to a certain degree, the new light attracted more eyes than the old. But, in proportion as Nanny fancied her favourite to be neglected, all the greater was the fondness which she lavished upon her, and, in return, the child loved her dearly.

Before the old nurse left us, a young one was engaged for little Charles; a smart, active, young woman of respectable family, named Rhoda; and between her and Nanny there existed a perpetual feud. Our mother was now and then obliged to interfere between them, and then hostilities apparently ceased; but *we* knew that this was only apparently. Each doted on her child; each quarrelled about it, and was ready to fight for it; but the children did not suffer amid these jarrings and jealousies, and therefore it was not of much consequence.

It was now the joyous time of the corn-harvest, and again we went with our father to those favourite fields to see the reaping. All was as pleasant, nay,

even pleasanter, than at the time of the hay-making. I despair of conveying to my readers one thousandth part of the joy which we every day experienced. There was the woodland lane again to be traversed; crabs were ripe on the old, mossy crab-trees; blackberries on the bushes, and nuts, though yet hardly ripe still worth the cracking, hung temptingly on the branches; and this not alone in the lane itself, but in the hedges and the little dingles of our own fields.

It was this autumn when the peculiar charm and beauty of many things became first perceptible to us. I remember that it was then we saw, for the first time, that a cluster of nuts was, in itself, a beautiful thing. For the beauty of flowers my sister Anna had always had the most vivid sense; even then she drew flowers, for a child, remarkably well: gathering flowers was with her a passion; there was no bank too steep; no ditch too wide; no mud too appalling to deter her from gathering a flower. Hence, in later years, she studied botany so assiduously, and cultivated flowers with such singular success; hence, when living in a close town, she filled her room with the most exquisite exotics, bringing around her beauty and grace, which, like the truest friends, furnished gladdening, wholesome thoughts for many an otherwise weary hour.

Blessings on thee, my sister, and on the fair and gentle human flowers which thou hast also reared around thee in an atmosphere of love and moral strength! Blessings on thee!

And now let us go back to the corn-fields, and see there the green acorns on the oak-tree under which

we eat our dinners, and the faintly reddening hips on the wild rose that casts wide its arching spray, and waves gently with the wind; and there is the high-climbing blue vetch in flower, and a late blossoming honeysuckle, and the elegant berries, yet green, of the bitter-sweet; and there is the blue chicory at our feet, and the rosy-hued rest-harrow, and, creeping among the blades of the short turf, the delicate eye-bright, with its exquisite flowers spotted with red and yellow; and the flower, which was always such a rare delight to us, the dark-blue milkwort; and there are the lovely pale yellow hawkweeds! What a nosegay we can gather! Then, if we look among the corn, there is the scarlet poppy, and the pink cockle, the large white chrysanthemum, and, creeping low, like a cheerful-hearted person in low life, is the hardy pimpernel, with its scarlet flower; and there, like a neighbour of the same character, but in better circumstances, is also the compact, firmly-built pheasant's-eye, with its round scarlet flower with the black middle! It was thus a little world rich in flowers; and there again, too, we met the labourers' children—those sunburnt, sturdy, good-tempered little sons and daughters of the soil, who welcomed us back again into their world with a most cordial but sheepish grace.

The corn was cut and in shock, and the flax was being pulled; and I made the terrible and strange discovery, as I thought, that flax, when drawn tightly through the hand by only one or two stems together, would cut as severely as a knife. When the corn was ready to be carried, a wagon came, and took it

to a neighbouring barn, which our father had hired, and where there was a threshing-floor, on which it was threshed at once. We were most assiduous attendants on the wagon; we watched it loaded in the field; we watched it go, rocking and creaking up the field and the lane beyond, and swing round through the gate with its piled-up sheaves. And the shouting of the men—and the clear, quiet, sunny air—and the dry stubble fields that we walked over after it—all live in my mind as a most charming bit of existence. When the wagon was unloaded, then we, and mostly some of the labourers' children, rode back; and one of the men sat on the first horse as if sitting on a bench, and another sat in the end of the wagon, with his feet dangling out behind; and we stamped our feet for joy, or tumbled down over the great coil of rope behind us, which we had not seen, and made a commotion among the forks which lay in the wagon, and then got scolded for being so clumsy, or for getting in danger of being hurt by the forks; and then, sobered a little, went, shaking rather than riding, down into the field again.

And so it went on. How long it lasted I really do not know; not more than a couple of days, I suppose; and then, after this, the flax was pulled, which I may as well say here, once for all, turned out but a bad speculation. The crop of turnips was sold on the land, and our farming came to an end, but not, however, before a cow was bought; for there being now four children in the family, present and future wants made our good parents deem a cow necessary; and the coming of the cow, which was henceforth seen, grazing or chewing her cud, from the parlour

windows, was an event of some interest to us children. At first, we never looked out of the window without seeing the cow, and we were a little troublesome to our mother's visitors, and the friends of the family, by calling attention to "our cow;" but fortunately it grew, like everything else, to be in time an old affair, and then we let it rest in peace.

Within our family all was harmony and joy; the baby, the little merry-hearted Emma; our kind parents; our own happy selves—we made a perfect little world; and, had it not been for vexations that came from without, all would have been like a little heaven; but Mr. Shepperley's machinations were actively in operation, and endless were the annoyances which he threw in the path of our father, and the petty, malicious intrigues of which he was the mover, merely to thwart and vex him—him who had always been his friend, and had done him nothing but good.

Our father had now for some years been much engaged by the inclosure of Needwood Forest; he frequently went there, and not unfrequently, when his business would allow it, took us with him. One day late this autumn, he had occasion to go to Tutbury, and then round by Barton home. It was probable that we might have occasion to stay out all night at one of these places; but that made no difference; we should go to a village inn, and have good entertainment, and with our father all was right for us. We went, as usual, in the gig; our father's business would be easily transacted everywhere, and it seemed to us that we had a long journey of pleasure before us. Tutbury, where there used to be the old bull-runnings, which our father,

when a boy, could remember, and which had a ruined castle, that we had so often seen from our own neighbourhood, was a very interesting place to us; besides which, Tutbury at that time was remarkable from another cause—a cause which made a wonderful talk then. There, lived Ann Moore, the famous woman who lived without eating; and we, like everybody else who went to Tutbury, were to go and see Ann Moore. But, before we reached Tutbury, we had to pass Sudbury, that hall and park which we admired so much, and where the old trees were of such wonderfully beautiful growth that, in my childish patriotism, I used to think "what would the French say, if they really invaded England, and came as far as this, when they saw such trees as these!" So much for the Park; and then there was the Hall, which the Queen Dowager, then a young girl like ourselves, was afterwards to inhabit, and in which my sister had once nearly lost her life, only narrowly escaping a fall from the cupola on the roof.

Arrived at Tutbury, we duly visited its castle, and looked out for our own little town from its hill, and talked of Mary Queen of Scots, and of the bull-running, and the minstrels in old times, who had the bull when he wascaught; and followed with our eye the windings of the lovely river Dove as it came meandering through the meadows, under this very castle-hill, from within a mile of our own town. Little things amuse simple hearts; and then, when we had exhausted all these, our father went to do his business, and we to rest and to have some refreshment at the inn; and, after that, to see the wonderful Ann Moore.

We had seen plenty of old women, we thought, as thin and skeleton-like as Ann Moore, but still we were very awfully impressed by this old lady, as she sat there, propped up in her bed, with her bony, skinny hands laid out, like claws, on the bed-clothes, to turn over the pages of the handsome Bible which some good clergyman had given her, or to clutch at the money which people laid before her. There were many visitors with her when we entered; one, a wonderfully fat woman, in a tight gown of crimson silk, who coughed, and shook herself, and was so very fat that she seemed to sit only on the edge of her chair. I remember thinking what a contrast there was between this lady and Ann Moore. Our father had seen Ann Moore before now, and had had much serious conversation with her; she professed to be very fond of his conversation, and therefore paid a deal of attention to us; but all the time I was there I could think of nothing else but the old nursery song—

> "There was an old lady all skin and bone;
> This old lady was very well known.
> She lay in bed, as I've heard say,
> For many years, to fast and pray:
> When she had lain a twelvemonth's space,
> The flesh was gone from hands and face;
> When that another twelvemonth was gone,
> She was nothing at all but a skeleton."

Such were my first humble attempts at parody. When we came away, our father told us that he had no doubt in his own mind of Ann Moore being, to a certain degree, an impostor; but the quantity of food which she did exist upon was really so extremely

small as to be in itself almost miraculous. This, as many persons may remember, was actually proved to be the case, when some years afterwards that rigid watch was placed over her which all but caused her death.

Our father's business had detained him longer than he expected, and it was almost twilight when we left Tutbury on our way to Barton, where we were to sleep. This being the case, he determined to stop all night at the intermediate village of Tattenhill, where was a comfortable public-house. When we there arrived, all was dark in and about the house, the shutters were all closed, and the yard-gate also; and it looked like a place of the dead.

"How is this?" said our father, dismounting. He tried the door; it was fast; he then knocked; all was silent; he knocked again; and then a child's voice within asked who was there. He replied, travellers, who wanted a night's lodging, and desired her to open the door. After some minutes, she did so, and showed herself, a girl of perhaps ten or eleven. She had been evidently preparing to go to bed; her frock was half off, and her tidy little night-cap was on her head, and in her hand she held a bed-candlestick, in which burned a meagre farthing candle, that gave of course the feeblest of lights.

"Oh, dear!" she said, in reply to our father's demand of a night's lodging—two bed-chambers, refreshment for us, and accommodation for the horse—"Oh, dear! There 's nobody at home but Kitty and me; everybody's gone to the wakes—father and mother, and Jacob, and everybody. There 's nobody at home but Kitty and me!" repeated she, in a tone of despair.

"And who is Kitty?" asked our father.

Without making any reply, the little girl turned round, and disappeared, and presently we saw the feeble light of the candle at an upper window, and heard the child's voice talking at its highest pitch, as if to some deaf person—"A gentleman and a gig, and some ladies," we heard her say; "and they want a night's lodging."

A low grumbling followed; and then the little girl, just ready to cry, said—"Now, don't be so cross! and come down and speak to him!"

Presently, an old, sullen-looking woman, in a printed bed-gown and mob-cap, made her appearance at the door, with a tall brass candlestick in her hand, and behind her the little girl, with her frock still unfastened, and a look of great perplexity and anxiety in her face.

"You can't be lodged here, to-night," said the old woman. "Master and missis is out; they 've gotten the keys; we 've nought i' th' house but could bacon and water!"

"But you can light a fire, and make us some tea, and boil us some eggs; you have bread and butter in the house, and we can have beds."

The old woman was as deaf as a stone; she heard nothing; she only saw that we wanted accommodation, and that she persisted we could not have. The little girl replied to our father's remarks, "Yes, fire we could have, and tea and eggs, and bread and butter; but not beds, for her mother had taken with her the keys of all the linen and the best rooms; but though the ostler was gone too, she would call up a neighbour who would attend to the horse; and,

though he could not be put into the stable, because Jacob had taken the keys with him, yet he could have a rug thrown over him, and stand here by the rack under the tree, in front of the house. Would that do?" she asked, meekly.

"Yes, yes; that would do nicely," said our father; and called her, "a good little maid."

"They can't stop! I say, you can't stop!" screamed the old woman, almost palsied by her displeasure as she saw us about to dismount; "master and missis is out: they 've gotten the keys."

The little girl, however, made her understand how it was to be; and then, while she ran off to call up the neighbour to look after our horse, we followed the old woman into the kitchen, where she set about her work with some agility, though evidently without good will, for she never spoke, but kept looking at us every now and then as if she could have put us out of the house with very good will.

In a few minutes in came the little girl, all alert—a nice, tidy little thing, that seemed to have all her wits about her, and to be as willing as she was ready. The fire burned up merrily, and the kettle began to sing, and out she drew the little stand, and set out the tea-things, whilst the old woman went maundering about after bread and butter and cream; and all this time the little girl's frock was loose, slipping off her shoulders, and giving her a deal of trouble: she shoved it up, but it would not stay, and she either could not or did not think of fastening it herself.

"Should we fasten it for her?" one of us asked of the other in a whisper. The other had been thinking of the same thing, and said "Yes;"

and then up we both started, and said, "Let me fasten your frock." I forget which did fasten it, but the little girl was very thankful, and our father said that we had done right. This little neighbourly action spread quite a cheerfulness over our minds, as is always the case. One does oneself more good by little acts of ready kindness than even the person whom one obliges. We were quite in good humour with everything; we talked a great deal both with our father and the little girl. Our father said that she was the handiest little maiden he had ever seen, and, when he next came that way, he would bring her a new frock. Her face was as bright as the fire that burned on the hearth. The old woman hovered round us, bringing what we wanted, but saying nothing; and when we were completely served, our father motioned to her to sit down on the wooden seat, within the wooden screen, by the fire—for my dear readers must understand that we are all this time sitting by the kitchen fire of a village ale-house, and a very comfortable place we found it. The old woman seated herself, and looked on; but she was so very deaf that we could not talk to her at all, and the little girl made her understand as much by signs as words.

"It is as good a cup of tea as I ever drank," said our father; "and the eggs are prime." We thought the same. It really was a charming time; and we were so taken with the little girl, who was so handy and active, that we were quite sorry to leave her.

But we must now go on to Barton for the night; and there it was where the wakes were being held, and perhaps we should not be able to get a bed even

there. It was pitch dark; there was not a star visible; and our father engaged the neighbour who had acted as groom to our horse to go with us with a lantern, for we had no lamps to the gig, and we were to take a cross road from some cause or other, which I have forgotten.

"You 'll see mother at the Shoulder of Mutton," said the little girl, as we got into the gig.

"If we see her, we shall tell her what a clever little daughter she has," said our father; and off we went, leaving the old, deaf woman quite satisfied, in consequence of the payment she had received.

Our drive through the darkness was interesting to us; we had never been out in unknown places so late as this before. The road was horrible, and we could only go at a foot's pace the whole way. The man walked at the horse's head with his lantern, which cast an uncertain light upon the black hedges and on the broken ground over which we drove. But the great event of the drive was the passing an encampment of gipsies: some of their people no doubt were at the neighbouring wakes, but there were many of them at home nevertheless. Every child knows, by pictures at least, what an encampment of gipsies is. We had seen a real encampment before now in the daytime, but never till now lit up with a blazing fire, over which hung a great steaming pot; never before seen in reality the black openings of the tents lit up, showing the wild, black-eyed mother who sat there, nursing her child; the big, brawny man, stretched out, as if asleep; the children grouped together—all wild and picturesque as any painter might wish. We, however, were not more astonished at thus

suddenly coming upon the encampment than they themselves appeared to be by our unexpected apparition in the solitary, dark lane. Their dogs barked, their horses trotted away; the people, old and young, male and female, started up, and at once the whole nomadic company was alive. Not a word, however, was said; on we went; and the encampment, having watched us for some time, seemed to subside into its former quiet. When, however, we were out of sight and hearing, the man who led the horse stopped it for a moment, and, coming up, said, in a thick, husky voice, "Those are the worst vagabonds in the country; if I had known they were here, I would not have come for any money! We 'll go now, if you please, a bit faster."

With these words, he again went to the horse's head, and we went on at a sort of pace between a walk and a trot, which shook us almost out of our seats. But this shaking did not drive away the terror which his words had infused into my heart. I feared that the gipsies would come in pursuit of us; my head was full of horrors numberless; the lanes seemed blacker and narrower than ever; I fancied that I could feel something dragging behind the gig; that I heard footsteps; that I saw shapes on that side and on this; the trees and gate-posts all looked frightful. I was terrified out of my wits, but I said nothing; and, as none of us spoke a single word, I fancied that all were equally frightened with myself.

At length we reached Barton, and long before we reached the inn we heard the merry sounds of the fiddles and the dancing, and the rattling of the pewter mugs on the wooden tables. It was all a stir

and a commotion. Horses were tied under trees; taxed-carts and market-carts were drawn up at the door. Many people were just setting off, half tipsy, and talking foolishly with thick voices. The landlord was at his door, in his shirt-sleeves, as we drove up.

There was not an empty sitting-room in the house; but beds we could have—oh, yes! capital beds! Terrified as I had been with the gipsies, and the darkness, and my own imagination, the noise of the revellers here—the fumes of the tobacco, the smell of beer and gin, and the crowds of common people, and the running to and fro that there was, and the glare of lights after the darkness—all bewildered and confused my poor brain, so that I could understand nothing. It was eleven o'clock, too—long after our usual time of going to bed—and our father, full of the kindest compassion for his poor little travelling companions, ordered our room to be got ready; and in one minute, at most, after we had laid our heads on our pillows, we were fast asleep.

Next morning, when we woke, it was very late. The sun shone brightly into the room, and looking from the window, we saw the village street, all quiet and orderly, as if no revels had ever taken place there. The Shoulder of Mutton, painted gaily in red and white on a blue ground, hung between two posts opposite; the clock, in the church-tower across the way, told it to be half-past ten o'clock. How late it was! and there, walking along the churchyard path, was our father, evidently on his way to the inn. We lost no time; we washed and dressed like lightning; but, before we were ready to go down, our father was at the chamber door.

Three minutes afterwards we were sitting with him at the breakfast-table, talking over yesterday, which in review seemed to us as long as three ordinary days; nay, it almost seemed a week to us since we had seen Ann Moore; how the day had spread itself out! And then we talked of the tidy little girl who had entertained us so well, and thought that her parents must be very queer people to leave her alone in the house with that cross, deaf woman; and then we pleased ourselves with the thought of our father taking her a new frock, and wished we could see her when it was given to her.

What a deal should we not have to tell our mother when we reached home!

CHAPTER XIV.

GOOD FOR EVIL.

Mr. Shepperley had been engaged for years in cheese-buying. He had not been remarkably prosperous before his coming to our town, but things had seemed to mend with him greatly since then. He amused himself, as we have said, by amateur farming, but his business was this dealing in cheese. He had a person in his employment of the name of Lambert, who travelled for him, not only to buy cheese, but to sell it also, and this man, who was greatly in his confidence, often had large sums of his money in his hands. In the summer, a rumour was in the town that this man was missing; that he had, it was feared, decamped with a considerable amount of money; and

if he were not found, it was said, there was no knowing how Mr. Shepperley's affairs would stand. Nothing of course, for some time, was talked of but this; our parents talked of it, but there was no rancour in their feelings; our mother, it is true, said that it had always been her impression that no blessing could rest upon him. The willows and the fir-trees did not now annoy our father half as much as they had done. He thought that, after all, Mr. Shepperley never would build on the land. But Nanny had none of their Christian forbearance. "It serves him right!" said she, "and I hope he 'll lose every penny; and I won't tell a lie for nobody, and I wish it with all my heart—a good-for-nothing interloper, that could not bear to see our master's prosperity. I hope he 'll come to beggary, that I do!"

We children, who sympathised so sincerely in all our parents' annoyances, and who had heard all that the Shepperleys had done under the influence of singularly bad feeling, may perhaps be excused in having more of Nanny's spirit than our parents, though we never openly avowed it as she did.

As the early succeeding year came on, it was clearly ascertained that Lambert had absconded, not only with the money which he should have paid for late purchases to a considerable amount, but also with money which for the last several months he had been assiduously collecting from persons indebted to his employer. A reward of a hundred pounds was now offered for his apprehension.

This was at the beginning of March. Our father was going to leave home on a journey of business into North Wales; and now it was the day before

that on which he was to set off. The day had been wild and stormy, and the evening seemed to come on unusually early.

After tea, our father took up the map of North Wales, and showed us where he was going. Our mother sat by the fire, at her work; little Emma was in bed; and Charles—the beauty!—he had been on our mother's knee till this moment almost. The fire burned cheerfully; our father had no anxious business on his mind to make him silent and thoughtful, nor had he any book which he wanted to finish. Our mother's work required no exact attention; she laid it down, or she took it up, and our father and she talked, and that of which they talked interested us greatly. They talked of Wales; how beautiful it was; how much they were attached to it; how, when we were old enough to understand and enjoy such things, and the little children were old enough for the journey, we would all go and spend a summer there. Our mother said that, much as she admired Derbyshire and the beautiful scenery there, that it was nothing to Wales, and that we would really go and take a house for the summer somewhere among the mountains, and thoroughly enjoy ourselves; and then, from talking of that which they would do in the future, they spoke of what had been in the past. There is nothing which children enjoy like hearing their parents tell of their earlier lives; and children, poor things! so seldom can get their parents to gratify their curiosity on these subjects when they want it. Children ask when parents are not in a talking humour, and when the mind perhaps is wearied, and cannot go back into those distant days;

the children urge, and the parents talk of being "bothered and worried to death." They seem angry, and the children go away rebuked and ashamed. Happy, then, are the children, who on a long evening which has only just begun, find their parents, all unsolicited, and just for their own amusement, disposed to go back again into the days that have been, and tell long histories, as if in emulation of each other, of the times when they were young. Thus was it on this pleasant evening. We seated ourselves, with the utmost satisfaction, in our little chairs, and, silently rubbing our hands together, like a delighted gourmand at the sight of an exquisite delicacy, awaited the treat that was coming. And then our father began and told of the time when he was at Kidwelly, in South Wales: it was at a dark time of his life, when many reverses of fortune had come all at once upon him, and he had made, as it were, a last throw, by engaging in the coal mines of this neighbourhood. It was about this time of the year—a wild and stormy time—his money lay, as it were, in coal by the seaside, and his best personal property was a fine horse, to which he was greatly attached. One night, as he lay in bed, he heard the tide coming up with unusual tumult. The high-water mark, even in spring-tides, was about a hundred yards from the house in which he lived. The roar of the water was tremendous; and presently, what was his alarm to hear it lashing along the shore just under the walls of his room! He was alone in the house; his man-servant was gone to a distant town on business, and the woman, who waited on him and cooked for him, lived a quarter of a mile off, higher up, and came daily. He started from

his bed in terror. There was not a star in the sky; heavy clouds seemed driven along before the wind, and the sea-spray covered the chamber window, and the whole house indeed, with water. The tide now came in with heavy waves against the house; the walls seemed to shake at every stroke. It seemed to our father as if his last hour was come; he thought of his stacks of coal, which the sea must have now carried far away; and black ruin, as well as death, seemed to stand before him. He commended himself to God, and dressed rapidly, considering it his first duty, if possible, to save his life. He heard his horse neighing below in its stall, as if it called for human help, and he rushed down stairs to save it. The lower room was already mid-leg deep in water, and, finding the attempt to open the door vain, he broke the window to make his escape. All was dark as death; the wind blew fearfully, and every moment the tide came in with greater force. In that dark and awful night, abandoned as he felt both by God and man, he described himself as almost overcome by the affection with which his horse seemed to greet him; he neighed; he rubbed himself against him; he made every demonstration of love. Our father led him from his stall to some higher ground, and then walking him backwards and forwards, lest he should take cold, he awaited the retreat of the tide and the coming of the morning. With the morning came, however, only a full knowledge of the misery and ruin and desolation of the night. Many houses were swept away, with all that they contained; many lives and much cattle were lost; the whole shore was swept of everything upon it—not a particle

of our father's coal remained. But his own misfortunes seemed little in comparison of what others had to endure. The whole summer felt the effects of it, and before autumn there was absolute famine. Our father had, as it were, to begin life again; but the bitterest grief that he felt, he said, was regarding his horse. In the first place, the noble creature had to live on short commons, like its master. He thought he would make any sacrifice rather than part with it; but at length the day came when it must go, or starve, and the latter could not be thought of. He sent it to Carmarthen fair. It was the finest horse there; and, spite of its lean condition, brought a noble price. "The money," said our father, "seemed almost like the price of blood to me, and yet it was, as one may say, the foundation-stone upon which my after-fortune was raised. The storm at Kidwelly seemed to clear the horizon of my life: better and brighter days came ever after."

And then, after our father had done, our mother told how she remembered removing with all her family from Cumberland down into South Wales, where her father was among the first engaged in the great iron works in the neighbourhood of Merthyr Tydvil; and how she remembered being there a little girl, and playing about with her brothers in the lovely valleys there, when inhabitants were but few —when the lovely little river Taafe ran singing along its rocky bed, overhung with alder-trees. And then came strange, wild anecdotes of the old forgemen and their superstitions; of spectres that they saw among the hills, one or two of whom came down and raked busily among the cinders of the forge, as

if looking for something which they could never find.

Thus talked our parents, and the time passed as if on wings of eagles. It was nine o'clock; it was past our bed-time. We must go to bed.

"Oh, no; not yet," we pleaded. "Do let us stay a little bit longer: we do so like to hear you talk!"

"Well, let them sit up," said our father. "Poor things! let them sit up. I shall not be here to-morrow night."

A little indulgence kindly given, how it touches the heart of a child—more especially when it expected a refusal of its small request! Yes, we might sit up, and hear them talk! And more than that, our mother said we should have some supper; and then she rang the bell, and ordered in some cheesecakes and biscuits, and damson-cheese and a bottle of cowslip wine, and our father said he would have in apples and walnuts, too; and thus a nice little entertainment was spread out as unexpectedly to us as to the Israelites their manna in the wilderness. We all ate cheesecakes and damson-cheese, and biscuits and apples, and sat cracking nuts, and drinking wine, till half-past ten. Our parents talked no more about the time when they were young, but they talked about this next summer, when really and truly the whole family should go to Matlock or somewhere; and then our father told us that he was going to buy more land, and that perhaps this year we should have a deal more hay-making than we had ever had before; and when we had heard this good news, our mother said that we looked sleepy, and that she could see, as it were, little pulleys to our eye-lids; and our father

laughed, and said that he saw the same at our mother's eye-lids, and that he really believed she was the sleepiest of us all; but that we must every one of us now go to bed, because he must be off by six o'clock the next morning; and so, as I was the youngest, he would carry me up-stairs on his back, and, because Anna was the oldest, she must light us.

Such a pleasant evening as that we thought had never been spent: we fancied we were not at all sleepy; but, however, we soon dropped into a pleasant oblivion when we lay in bed, and dreamed all night about going to Matlock, or somewhere, next summer, and into Wales when we were old enough.

Next morning, when we woke, our father had set out on his journey.

This journey, in itself merely connected with business, could in no way have interested the reader had it not been for that which it led to, and which we will now proceed to relate. Our father had to see an estate lying on the sea-shore, in Flintshire, and which consisted of several small farms. Among the occupiers of these, he was particularly recommended to one man as a person somewhat above his class, and from whom he might obtain information which would be useful to him. To this person he went. The man apologised for not taking our father into the parlour, which he said was occupied by a lodger, but seated him in a sort of better kitchen, where they began to transact their business. Our father sat with his back to the parlour door, and his face towards a large old-fashioned looking-glass, which slanted forward from the wall, and exactly reflected the parlour-door. Whilst they were in the midst of their busi-

ness this door opened; our father accidentally raised his head at the moment, and saw, to his infinite amazement, no other person than Lambert, the agent of Mr. Shepperley, and for whose apprehension a hundred guineas was now offered. Startled as he was by this apparition, he gave no sign of surprise or recognition, but went on, listening and replying to the farmer, noticing all the while the movements of the other person. He, seeing a stranger in the kitchen, withdrew again, and the parlour-door closed; presently, however, this door again opened, but quite softly and silently, and he, quite unconscious the while of being observed, peeringly took a review of the stranger. Anon, the door closed as silently as it had opened; and then, apparently satisfied, he came out boldly, with his hat on, and went out of the house by a door which did not oblige him to pass before them. When he was out of the house, and their conversation seemed naturally to be brought to a close, our father, as if quite casually, inquired where this lodger came from, and who he was? The farmer could not give very definite information; his name, he said, was Watson, and he came from somewhere out of the North of England; he had been with them three weeks or so; he had come at first quite accidentally, on a stormy night in February; he had taken a post-chaise to Abergelle, and had been upset, and very much hurt; he had his head tied up, and a great patch over his eye, for a whole week after he came. He was a very quiet gentleman, however. He went for his luggage to Chester a few days after he came to them, and had been with them ever since. He had said that he had brothers in America, and he talked

of going over to them. He was a very clever, well-spoken gentleman, the farmer said; would our father like to have some talk with him?

"No, no!" said our father, hastily, and took his leave. This was a strange rencontre. Here was the man who no doubt was personally possessed of Mr. Shepperley's property. What was he to do? Mr. Shepperley was his enemy; had returned him evil for good; had annoyed him in every possible way; had counteracted him; had endeavoured to rob him of the innocent pleasure his own little possessions could give him; had insulted him before his own townspeople; had maligned him to his friends; had, in short, embittered his peace for the last two years. What should he now do? Let this man escape; return evil for evil; and then, when his enemy was perhaps reduced to poverty by this man's flight, go to him, and say, "I could have laid my hands on him, and saved you from ruin; but I would not, because you were my enemy!" Should he act thus? Human nature is, we know, alike everywhere, and these were the thoughts that presented themselves; but our father let not such thoughts as these influence him to evil. "No," said he; "the man is my enemy; evil for good he has requited me; but, for all this, I will not do otherwise than I would be done to. I will save Shepperley if I can; I will return good for his evil!" Blessings on our father's memory for this victory over himself!

He sent for the farmer to the inn, and then informed him that his lodger was such and such, as he described. The farmer started; it was impossible! It took a long time to convince him; but suspicion

once excited, he remembered many things which confirmed all that my father had said. Some of the household had doubted his really having a black eye. He had been seen once or twice with sandy whiskers on; he always seemed suspicious when anybody was about the place; he never went to church, nor farther than the garden, excepting after dusk; his linen, the women of the family had observed, was marked with some initial which did not serve for Watson. He now therefore promised to do all that lay in his power to bring him to justice, and seemed quite impatient to set about it. Our father said that a hundred pounds reward was offered for his apprehension. On this, the farmer's countenance fell. "Hang it!" said he, "money is good in its way, and it never was my luck to have a hundred pounds either given or offered me; money is money's worth, any how; but money for a human being's life or liberty, that rather goes against my conscience!"

Our father commended the farmer's sense of honour; "but," said he, "if you do not take it, some one else will, that's all. This man must be secured. I shall go myself immediately to Flint for the proper authorities, and, in the meantime, shall look to you to deliver him up."

The farmer no longer made any hesitation. The whole thing was done as by the most skilful management; and within four-and-twenty hours he was lodged in Flint Jail.

Our father came home with the consciousness of having done a good action. The news of this man's unexpected apprehension had not yet reached the town. I shall never forget our father's countenance

when he came home; he looked pale and excited. Our mother was alarmed, for she feared that he was ill, or that he had bad news to tell. "No," said he, "bad news I have none to tell—rather, I think you will consider it, good. I have had a severe combat with myself, and have been the victor. I have, in short, saved Shepperley from ruin — voluntarily done it!"

"Thank God, for having strengthened you to do this!" said our mother, and wiped her eyes.

We, too, were affected; for, though we did not exactly understand how, we knew that our father had returned good for evil. There is something very ennobling in generosity and virtue of every kind. We both of us felt it; the love and admiration of virtue were kindled in our hearts. We looked on our father with pride; in our eyes he was a far greater man than if a golden coronet was on his brows. We said we were glad that our father had done this; and if Bob Shepperley were here now, we would shake hands with him; and we were very sorry that we had ever said a word against the Shepperleys' baby; it was a fine baby, of that there was no doubt; and yet, after all, everybody must see that it was nothing to our Charley!

Our father wrote a note to Mr. Shepperley, informing him of what he had done, and leaving him now to take the necessary steps to recover his property. We were all impatient for his answer. Our mother had wondered how he would behave; she thought he must be overwhelmed with shame of his own conduct, and that he would feel coals of fire heaped upon his head She said that, if there were one spark of

generosity in him, he would fly to our father, and ask forgiveness for all his unkindness and malice; and if there were one grain of goodness in him, he would feel shame and bitterness towards himself, and towards our father gratitude and the highest admiration of his conduct.

Our father said merely, that he must leave the thing to itself; that he had done what he believed to be right; and that was alone sufficient reward.

This he said, dear, good man; but it was evident, by his impatience till he gained an answer, that he hoped for something more; he hoped to melt a hard heart; to excite, by his own virtue, the sense of goodness in a spirit naturally base. We children, as we had felt from the first, were quite impatient to be forgiving everybody; we wanted the whole Shepperley family here to forgive them, to heap kindnesses on them, to taste again and again, as the expression is, "the luxury of doing good."

Mr. Shepperley, however, did not come in person either to express his thanks, or to receive our forgiveness; he wrote a note in return; he thanked our father for the trouble he had been at, but said that he had received a regular announcement from the authorities in Flint, informing him of the apprehension of Lambert. Nothing in this world could be cooler than this note. Our mother was very warm about it; our father moderated her, but it was evident that he was hurt.

We went into the garden, and presently our father came, and took us up to the Timber-lane Fields; and if we had not known of this his late vexation, we might have said that no trouble had been near his spirit for

many months; he talked so cheerfully, and ran races with us, and looked for orchises and primroses, as if he had been a child. Surely there must have been truth in his words, "that he had done his duty, and that alone was a sufficient reward!" When we returned, our mother told us that Mrs. Shepperley had been; she talked a deal about gratitude, and said that she hoped there might be a better understanding between us than there had been. At these words, our mother, somewhat offended, drew herself up, and said, that, as to a bad understanding, that implied fault on both sides. Now, on the contrary, her own and her husband's conduct had always been the most open and friendly in the world; the Shepperleys must thank themselves for the bad understanding. On this, Mrs. Shepperley had burst into tears, and laying her hand on our mother's arm, said she herself had a deal to bear; that if she might rule, things should have been very different to what they had been, &c., &c. Our mother was a little touched; and Mrs. Shepperley again and again, with much apparent emotion, declared that she should never cease to feel the deepest gratitude; and then took her leave.

Our mother was now inclined to think that, as Mrs. Shepperley said, if she might rule, things should be different to what they were. That was the opinion of a day or two; but then came poor Nanny, with her vehemence and her hearsay.

"Well, there never was in this world such a man as our master! Would I have stopped the fellow! No, not I! I would have helped him off; and now what will our master get by it? Why, that all the

Shepperleys, big and little, will despise him, and do him all the more mischief for it! Folks say 'one good turn deserves another,' but those Shepperleys' maxim is 'one good turn deserves two bad ones.' And now what do you think Mrs. Shepperley herself says, when our master's letter came in? why, she says to Martha, the nurse-maid, 'What must he be poking into our affairs for? as if our advertisements would not have taken Lambert; but it's just like him, always poking his fingers into other folks' pies."

Oh, Nanny, Nanny, was not this a piece of your own invention? So one might have imagined, and perhaps discovered, if one had not had such a prejudice against the Shepperleys, and, spite of one's mood of forgiveness, been ready to believe anything against them.

The affair of the Shepperleys was now two or three weeks old. He was away from home, following up clues which presented themselves, now here and now there, for the recovery of other money than that which had been found in Lambert's possession. The town was ringing with the report of our father's noble action, and the town was generous enough to declare that it was indeed a noble action; people began to say that, after all, our father was vastly superior to Mr. Shepperley; and what had Mr. Shepperley done for them, with all his swagger and talk? Did not they walk on good pavements of our father's laying down; were not the streets, on winter nights, light and comfortable; was not water now freely given for the use and accommodation of the poorest of the inhabitants; and through him there was now

no danger of breaking one's ribs by running them against a projecting post or rail, or breaking one's shins over a step or a scraper; and did not people, who now came to the town after a few years' absence, wonder at its general improvement; and was not all this owing to the public spirit of our father? To be sure it was! and he was out of pocket by it, and had experienced nothing but annoyance. Well, it should not be so much longer. Thus talked the good townspeople; for, like us children, they were quite kindled into a noble, generous spirit, by the contemplation of a fine action.

Upon this feeling also they acted; but alas, our poor father was soon no longer in a state of mind to be cheered even by the brave enthusiasm of his townspeople, for his heart was full of the most fearful anxiety. Our mother was ill. A dark cloud rested, as it were, on our house. It was early summer; the garden was full of flowers; the birds were singing round in the trees, but none of us enjoyed any of these things, for a sore sickness had seized upon her who was as the sunshine of the house, and every one wore a sad countenance, and moved about softly, as if they feared to disturb a beloved sleeper.

The little children, however, throve and throve; Nanny and Rhoda carried them out, and kept up their old feud, though, from love to their mistress, they quarrelled only when no one could hear them.

CHAPTER XV.

HOUSEHOLD WISHES OBTAINED.

Every morning now, the first question was "how is our mother this morning?" For a long time people shook their heads in reply: they hoped she was no worse, but alas! there came not the cheering words, "she is better!" Physicians came from a distance, the most skilful of physicians; and prescriptions, and medicines, and with them new hopes; but the cloud remained still in the house, and the answer was, "she is very ill indeed!" Everybody was unusually kind to us; neighbours and friends asked us to spend the whole day at their houses. We walked out every evening with Mrs. Parker, for our father seemed never to go out.

Long rows of medicine bottles stood on a shelf in the kitchen, and little Emma had empty pill-boxes to play with till she cared nothing about them. At length it pleased the mercy of God to send, as it were, the wing of an angel to fan away the cloud by degrees. Blessed be God who afflicts only to turn our hearts the more to him!

"She is a little better," began now to be the reply. "Certainly she is better; the doctor gives hopes."

People now looked so smilingly on us, and met us saying, "we were glad that your mother is better!" Oh, and so were we!

Our father began to walk out with us again. We began again to hear the little ones laughing loudly,

and even crying too in the house. The physician's visits were less frequent. The shelf in the kitchen —the bottles having been sold again and again—now filled but slowly, and pill-boxes began again to be in request. Our mother now sate up in bed, and now we were allowed to be in her room an hour or two at a time.

The woman who waited upon her was the mother of the little girl to whom we had given the dolls, the wife of the English soldier in the doleful French prison. Our mother was now well enough to sit up in an easy-chair, and to bear conversation in her room, and this woman now told us of her husband's sufferings, and showed to us the letters which, "few and far between," written as with a blunt stick on common cap-paper, had been smuggled out of his prison and sent over—Heaven knows how. Pathetic letters they were, and revived all our old horror and abhorrence of the Conqueror Buonaparte.

Our mother now sate in a wrapping-gown, supported by pillows, at the open chamber-window, through which came the soft, warm gales, sweet with odours of honeysuckle and jasmine. Every moment of time which we had to spare we passed in her room; she was more interesting to us now than even the little darling Charles, now nearly twelvemonths old.

A sorrowful thing is sickness—most sorrowful when those, dear to us as our own lives, are its victims. Everything that comes in the form of good, joy, riches, honour, all these lose their value; we cannot enjoy them, for our hearts are cut to the quick; they have room but for one sentiment, and that is

love and sorrow. A mournful thing indeed is sickness, for in our souls it is closely akin to death!

But oh, how joyful a thing is the recovery of a beloved friend—a mother, a wife, a child! Yes, it is joyful, and let those bless God to whom has been vouchsafed such blessing! Better than feasting, better than riches, better than the applause of the world, is the seeing the hue of health again tinge a beloved cheek which we have seen lately white, as we thought, with the pallor of death. The sitting-up for the first time; the going out for the first time—what a holiday of the heart they create!

Day by day I have watched a cheek fade; an eye grow dimmer, a voice fainter—and oh, surest sign of all, a spirit grow purer and nobler—I have said death is there! and then have started as from a traitor in my own soul. I have shut my eyes, my every sense against conviction, and have said, "No, death will not come here!"

But death has come—has shorn down the flower and left me to wake as from a frightful dream! I have then gone abroad, and seen happy, loving groups around *their* invalid who was drawn out in the easy-chair for the healing, cheering, spring air. Day after day I have met them; the group has been gayer day by day; the cheek of the convalescent has become more and more of a healthy hue: I partook their joy, though to see them made my very heart ache. I could tell, by my own unfulfilled longings, how great was their happiness; what joy there was in their waking, what pleasant dreams in their sleep; how cheerful would seem the home to which they had to

return; how joyous each coming day that brought strength to their beloved!

Thank God that sickness does not always end in death!

Our parents had said that in summer we should all go to Matlock, or somewhere. The summer came, and the doctors said that a month at Buxton would do our mother good, would perhaps quite restore her. Thither our father took her and her attendant, and after staying a few days returned, bringing us the good news that she certainly would be much better soon. The house was desolate when she was gone; we thought we should never get through the whole month without her. The hay-harvest was over, and, somehow, the hay-harvest this year had not the charms for us that it had formerly. Mrs. Parker, too, was gone into Leicestershire to see her daughter; everything was against us, when fate threw in our way the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. Here was a joy for us for a month of summer—a month of summer weather in the midst of a garden! We read, and read, and read, and could think of nothing but caliphs and dervishes, and barbers and magicians, and fair Persians, and sultanas, and genii of the sea and of the air, and old women and enchantresses, and Heaven knows what. Our heads were fairly turned by them. We invented no more tales about common things; we had done with dramas from quiet history. Nothing had any charm for us that was not an Eastern Tale. Again the greatest intimacy subsisted between us and the Taylors. We lent them the volumes as we had done with them; they sate in

their garden reading, and we in ours, doing the same; we flew to the hedge and compared our ideas and opinions, and then thrust another volume into their hands that they might read what had just entranced us. We were all in a perfect delirium. Rhoda, Charley's nurse, found one of the books; she too read and was as much charmed as we. Nothing was done; nothing was talked of, nothing was thought of, but the Arabian Tales.

Out of our dream of Araby the Blessed, however, we were awoke by two things: which of them afforded us the greater joy it is difficult to say—but we will take them consecutively. And first of all, a word or two of Mr. Shepperley.

Poor Mr. Shepperley's grandeur was now at an end. A considerable part of the embezzled property was recovered on the apprehension of Lambert, but such defalcations in many ways came to light; such demands presented themselves on all hands; such embarrassment and perplexity had fallen upon Mr. Shepperley's affairs, that it would take years to retrieve them, if total bankruptcy could be avoided. Our father had freely and fully forgiven his enemy: the dark fir-trees by the garden side caused him no longer any annoyance; he spoke now of "poor Shepperley," and I verily believe longed for an opportunity of doing him good. He pitied now the man against whom the tide of misfortune had set in.

Nanny said that all this served Mr. Shepperley right, and that if he came to want bread she should not pity him. But Nanny's "bark," to use a Scotch proverb, "was worse than her bite," for a week afterwards, when the Shepperleys' baby actually had

the croup, as she predicted, she surprised us and herself no doubt, by the most genuine expression of pity, and a declaration that "if missis was at home and would have given her leave she would have gone and nursed it."

But I was going to tell of something which gave us pleasure, and it certainly was not that all these troubles had befallen Mr. Shepperley, although in some sort the Shepperleys' misfortune brought about our advantage.

One day when we were playing together in the garden, we heard our father's voice very cheerfully calling us. "Children," said he, and we flew to him. He was standing against the fence which divided our garden from the much-desired piece of ground, and was twisting off young twigs from one of Mr. Shepperley's young Scotch firs: "what should you think now," said he, "of our having this piece of land this autumn?"

We jumped for joy. "And should we then have the fountain and the greenhouse?" we asked.

"How pleased your mother would be!" said he, without replying to our question.

"And shall we have it?" we demanded eagerly.

"I think that perhaps we may," said our father.

"And then we shall have these ugly fir-trees cut down?" asked we.

"Yes, we will!" said our father emphatically.

We were ready to lend a helping hand that minute.

"It is not ours yet," said our father, "but I was thinking how pleased your mother would be if we could get it, and then keep it for her as a pleasant surprise when she came."

"Let us! let us," we exclaimed. Our father smiled, and said that perhaps that was easier said than done, but that we should see. Nothing more could we get from our father that night; and the next morning the plan that he unfolded to us put the thoughts of the garden almost out of our heads.

"Now," said our father, "suppose I were to take you over to see your mother at Buxton, could you keep the secret about the garden quite safe from her, and never hint one word about it?"

We laughed; we leaped up; we screamed for joy. "Take us to Buxton to see our mother? Oh do, do! and we will never say one syllable about the garden!"

Our father seemed to have arranged all his plans ready; there was hardly time for us to turn ourselves round, for he said that he was going to set off directly, and we must therefore be ready in no time. It would be vain to attempt any description of Nanny's consternation at this news. We, to set off instantly to Buxton to see our mother! and nothing ready—the best frocks in the wash; the second best frocks wanting the tucks letting down; the best bonnets none of the best; the new shoes not come from the shoemaker, and the old ones out at the toes! Oh Lord! oh Lord! It was just like these men, never to give one a minute's warning; they had no more thought than cats! Poor Nanny was in despair, and well she might be; we danced about with little Emma; we kissed the darling Charles; we upset the jug and basin of water; we put on the wrong shoes; we nearly sat on our best bonnets; we tore the strings off our petticoats—we were quite out of our senses.

And now the gig is at the door! and the little trunk is not half ready with the things—and there, the combs and brushes are not in! and Nanny is quite sure that something will be forgotten that ought not to be forgotten! and at the last minute —just as I am going-down stairs the discovery is made that one of my stockings is wrong side out! It must be changed—our father calls—I cannot stay; and poor Nanny consoles herself with the reflection that to put on anything wrong side out is lucky.

Our father and we had made many pleasant little journeys together before, but none so pleasant as this. We were going to see our mother who was so much better, and we all three of us had a pleasant secret in the bottom of our hearts that we were not to tell to any one. It was to lie there like a little well-spring of joy, but was to lie there concealed.

Our father, however, annoyed us a little by saying that he doubted whether we should keep the secret, and quite distressed me by saying that he did not so much fear Anna telling it as me, but that I was famous for "letting the cat out of the bag;" I almost jumped out of the gig in indignation. I could not think that I was so! Was I really? I besought my father to tell me how and when I had ever let any cat out of the bag. He replied, "Plenty of times; but there was no use in reaping up old grievances; if he chose to tell me he could; but by-gones should be by-gones."

I was both grieved and angry; I wished he had not said so; I began to consider with myself: I could not remember ever letting the cat out of the

bag more than anybody else. "Do I, Anna?" I asked, appealing to her.

"Nay, nay," said my father laughing, "do not drag her into the scrape; shew us now that you can keep this secret, and then we will call you trustworthy."

"Oh dear me!" said I, in a tone of discontent, "it is such a bad thing to get a bad character. I know that they say I am 'slippery-fingered,' and you and my mother say sometimes do not give that to Mary, because she is so 'slippery-fingered,' and now Nanny says so, and it is very disagreeable! I don't think in reality that I am so, only I have got the character for being so, and that is just as bad as if I deserved it!"

"Yes, yes," said my father, smiling at my earnestness, "it is a bad thing to have a bad character—but a great deal worse to deserve it."

"But do I deserve it?" I demanded with quite a sore feeling in my mind.

"We will see," said my father; "if you can keep this little cat of ours safe in the bag all the time we are at Buxton."

"I think she will," said Anna, kindly putting her hand into mine and pressing it.

This little conversation troubled me. I could think of nothing but what secrets I had ever let out, and what cups I had ever broken. My pride was wounded; I thought that I was wrongfully accused, and it was a long time before I recovered my customary easy flow of spirits; nor did I quite get over my vexation, or forget it, until I met my own dear mother.

She looked so well, so cheerful, so active, so glad to see us, that our happiness was complete.

"Mother, we are going to have that piece of land!" came to my lips within the first five minutes of our meeting, but a good angel checked the words. I felt as if I had been saved from a fall down a precipice, I was almost sick with the thought. "Oh, *if* I had said it!" I thought to myself: it quite depressed my spirits, and I could not help thinking to myself, perhaps after all, I do let cats out of bags. And I fear that I shall tell her before I have done, for it is never out of my mind. And it never was. I was always thinking now suppose I *should* tell; suppose I *should* blab it out quite suddenly; should forget myself and say, "Mother, we are going to have that piece of land!" This secret was quite a torment to me and, spite of the pleasure which the thing itself afforded me, I wished I had never known it.

To us of course Buxton was a most interesting place. We went to see the people bathe, which we thought marvellously odd; so many people in one bath, and our own mother among them. We walked about and saw the gay company, and were introduced to the acquaintance which our mother had made, and went to the petrifying well and the spar-shops, and had spar-boxes, and smelling-bottles in the shape of onions, given to us; it was a new and a curious world.

On Sunday we all went in a post-chaise to spend the day with some friends of our parents in a Peak village, about fifteen miles off. The whole drive was to us most interesting through such a stony, grey and tree-less region: the grey stone walls which separated the fields; the bleak hill-sides scattered over

with huge masses of grey stone; the grey, stony road along which we drove; the villages built of grey-stone with stone roofs to their houses; the people, old and young, with their light hair, light blue eyes and very pink complexions, giving one the idea of dwellers in a keen mountain air; all were objects of curious remark to us. The village to which we were going, like all the rest, stood low in a valley among bleak, tree-less hills, a little group of grey houses, with the well-proportioned church-spire rising high above them. The village, however, was more remarkable for many tall ash-trees, and thence had its name. A little brook ran along the village street, crossed at almost every house by a broad slab of stone which formed a bridge. This clear brook came murmuring merrily along from a wild and rocky valley which, contrasting pleasantly with the bald hill-sides, was full of trees and verdure.

The house to which our visit was directed stood delightfully above this valley, a grey house with a deal of white painting about it, which must give it in winter a cold look, but which in summer strikes the eye as particularly agreeable, especially when creeping plants and abundance of flowers are taken into account. The garden walks were composed of lime-stone, broken as fine as the finest gravel, and which, like everything else, looked grey. The interior of the house spoke of the region in which it stood; there were models of mines under glass-shades, cabinets of minerals; fine specimens of quartz and lead ore stood on the chimney-piece among marble obelisks and spar candlesticks. The father, mother, and

children had all a bleak, weathered look; their cheeks were pink, and so were the tips of their noses and their chins, yet they were rather a handsome family. There were plenty of children, and they, like their parents, were excellent hosts; they took us to see their gardens which were bordered with limestone; stonecrop and house-leek, and sedums and rock-cistus grew about everywhere and really were beautiful.

From the garden we went to the lovely valley whence issued the little rivulet, and a real paradise of a valley it was. How beautifully it lives in my remembrance with its grey, splintered rocks covered with lichens; its fantastic growth of tree and shrub; its brawling, playful rivulet; its soft, green herbage; the depth which we seemed to descend into its bottom; the few sheep that were grazing there; the height that we looked up to the blue sky above, where hawks, that we fancied might be eagles, were soaring; how full of poetry it was! These things seen, but not reasoned about, enter very deeply into the imagination of children and never pass away. Were I now to see that valley, it would perhaps appear very different—a mere common dell—but it lives in my imagination, nevertheless, as the loveliest of all valleys—a bit of Elysian scenery.

This was a rich day to us, and furnished us with a deal to think of, besides which we carried away with us pieces of blue-john quartz and lead ore, with which we thought to begin a cabinet of minerals. I was never once troubled by my secret all this day.

The next morning we left Buxton.

"You have kept your secret famously, Mary," said our father, as we were on our homeward way.

"I knew that I should," said I, triumphantly.

"Remarkably well," said my father, as if it was an extraordinary thing.

I had it on my lips to say that I was very nearly blabbing it out, when I remembered fortunately, that the telling this would be the letting my own cat out of the bag. I felt as if I had only narrowly escaped betraying myself, and I thought for the first time, "Perhaps, after all, I really cannot keep a secret well."

We came home: Mrs. Parker too had returned, and our lessons again commenced. For several days nothing was said about the piece of land; our father was busy in his office, and we with our tasks. We were beginning to count the days before our mother's return, when our father one evening told us with a joyful countenance that he was really and truly the possessor of the long-wished-for piece of land, though we should not come into possession of it till autumn; and because I had kept the secret so well at Buxton, I should have the pleasure of announcing the joyful news to our mother.

I thought that now to be honest I must tell the truth about the trouble I had had to keep it. My father smiled, and said,

"Yes, yes, he could believe it, but that after all there was more virtue in resisting temptation than in never being tempted."

I was all at once a little heroine in my own eyes, and felt happy to have deserved my father's commendation. We walked up and down the garden and stood on tiptoe to look over the fence into our *own* piece of land. We longed for Michaelmas, when

we could go in and see the envious fir-trees pulled up. We supposed that immediately the piece of land would be laid to the garden; the fountain made; the conservatory built, and the joy and delight of a handsome garden at once be ours. Great therefore was our astonishment, great beyond words, when our father said, "No, the garden would not be made yet; perhaps not for some years; one thing at a time must be done; he had secured the land, and that was enough for the present." It did not seem so to us. Children never like waiting; they live in the present, the future is a great way off, and time seems to move slowly. I now in review can see, what in perspective I could not see, the time really come when the fence was taken down, and the younger children bounded, as joyfully as we then should have done, into the new piece of ground which was, henceforth, to become a part of our own pleasant garden.

My whole thought was, next, how I should in the best manner communicate this good news to our mother. Sometimes I thought of making her guess what glad tidings I could tell; sometimes I thought of writing it in a sort of address on her return, which I would put into her hand; sometimes that I would lead her into the garden right up to the fence, and bidding her to look over it, exclaim, "All this is ours now!" and sometimes I thought of shouting out the moment she entered the house, "Mother, mother, that piece of land is ours!" and this after all seemed to me the pleasantest and the most natural.

It was night when our mother came, and we sate up for her coming. How joyous is a mother's return! We watched at the gate for the chaise

turning the corner of the street, and at last we beheld the joyful sight.

And now our mother had kissed us and was in the house, and Nanny and Rhoda were both in the lobby presenting each her own child; boxes and bandboxes were being brought in, and I was bursting with my secret, when before she entered the parlour-door I kissed her hand, exclaiming, "Mother, guess! Our father has bought it!—It is our own now! Are you not pleased?"

Our father stood by and smiled; Anna looked uneasy; our mother bewildered. I saw, after all, that I had managed it badly.

"Your mother understands nothing about it—the little cat is in the bag yet," said our father, laughing.

"That piece of land is ours," said I, drawing her to the window, and now speaking plainly, "our father has bought that piece of land that was Mr. Shepperley's; the fir-trees will now be cut down, and it will be our garden sometime."

"Have you really bought the land?" exclaimed our mother, evidently greatly surprised and pleased, "have you indeed bought it?"

"Yes," said our father, "and Mary has been deputed to tell you the good news because she kept the secret all the time we were at Buxton."

My mother smiled and stroked my head, and said that she would reward my good tidings with something or other.

CHAPTER XVI.

FAREWELL!

Scarcely was our mother again settled at home when Mrs. Parker and she had many closetings together, and long consultations. We wondered what in the world it could be about. At length, like most other mysteries it came out, and greatly indeed did it surprise us.

Mrs. Parker, it seemed, wished to reside with her daughter in Lincolnshire. She wished to go at Michaelmas, or even before it, and thus she would be no longer able to teach us. We received with surprise, and no little sorrow, this intelligence, and then, just afterwards, intelligence no whit more agreeable—after Michaelmas we were to go to a boarding-school at Croydon. Croydon was a long way off, above a hundred and fifty miles, and we children had never heard its name before.

Mrs. Parker took the map of England and showed us where it was, and by what route we should go, how we should pass through Leicester and Northampton, and St. Alban's and London! What a charming journey we should have! how happy we should be at school, with companions of our own age, and how good it would be for us, and what a pleasure it would be to be able to improve ourselves more than we could do at home!

Ah! we thought, it was all fine talking. They who were going to stop at home could easily make light of other people's going away!

The weeks went on; new clothes were getting ready for us, and our parents began to talk of the journey. Our mother was to go with us; we were to go by post-chaises all the way, and should be three days on the journey. Our parents were kinder and more cheerful than ever; they placed nothing but pleasant images before our minds; they made, even at last, the going to school seem pleasant.

Michaelmas approached; our dear Mrs. Parker gave us our last lesson; she took her last cup of tea with us; took with us her last walk, gave us good counsel, blessed us, and we all parted with tears. Ah! if all teachers were like Mrs. Parker, there would be no prejudices, even in the minds of the happiest, home-loving children, against school and instructors!

The happy day came, on which our father had possession of the long-desired piece of land, and all the family made an incursion into it, and men dug up the fir-trees and the willows. Our father walked about with little Charles in his arms, and our mother by one side, and we with little Emma between us on the other, and listened to him plan how at some future time here should extend lawn, there shrubbery; here should be the fountain, there the conservatory, and here—a new idea inspired by the moment—a rustic summer-house, with a sun-dial before it. We now were glad, seeing that we were going to school such a long way off, that nothing was going to be done for the present. We flattered ourselves that we might be at home when the great alteration really took place.

And now the day was at hand on which we two little pilgrims of life were about to be left somewhat

to our own guidance; were to be removed from all those we loved, and were to be sent away among strangers. But yet we were to be together; we two, who had gone hand in hand so lovingly, so consolingly —that was the one drop of comfort, and it sweetened the whole bitter cup.

It was on the 24th of October when we set out; in the maturity of autumn, but of an autumn, bright and warm and dry. Our luggage was strapped behind the chaise; a large, new black leather trunk, and one or two smaller ones were inside. We had a basket of biscuits and cheesecakes and sandwiches to eat when we were hungry, for Nanny remembered that we had good appetites, and she put up provision enough for three or four days, even had we not taken our regular meals each day, and thus we had the pleasure of astonishing beggars and wayside children by a rain of provisions into their hats or laps.

The first night we spent with some relations of ours near Leicester; the lady of the house was passionately fond of flowers; her rooms were like a conservatory, and her garden a perfect garden of Eden. We were obliged to acknowledge that our garden was not as pretty as this; but thought what it might be when that piece of land was added to it, and we, grown up and come from school, would attend to it like this lady; and visions of our future garden floated before us —prophetic glimpses of that garden which in coming years we two inseparable sisters were to cultivate together and take such pride in, till fate, or better still, a wise and good Providence parted us and gave us each —the graver and more important duties of life wherewith to occupy ourselves.

As we next morning left Leicester, the bells of all the churches rang; flags floated here and there from the public buildings and church-towers; processions were moving along, and all was astir. "What is this all about?" we asked. Our mother told us that it was to celebrate what was called a jubilee, because King George the Third had now reigned fifty years.

Throughout all the day we saw nothing but festivity; at first oxen or sheep carried in procession prepared for roasting whole; great fires burning up, and spits of a gigantic size ready to receive the equally gigantic roast. Processions bearing garlands, and decorated with ribans, were parading the streets of town or village; bands of music were playing; bells were ringing; public-houses were all astir; schools of children, girls and boys, and town corporations were marching to church; gentlemen's carriages were driving about; country people were jogging along the roads by cartfuls. Anon, and the smell of roasting meat came from the great fires which were in part hidden by hundreds of men and boys that stood around—the sheep and the oxen were now turning on the spits and roasting. Under village trees, and in market-places, huge tables were being spread for hundreds of guests that were going to sit down to dine in the open air; barrels of ale were being fixed on stout supports; people were running backwards and forwards in their shirt-sleeves. Everybody, except these servitors of the public, were in holiday trim.

A little farther on, and people were all coming out of church; corporations; volunteer regiments; schools, clubs, both male and female; gentlemen and ladies, poor folks, old and young, all in their best attire.

Then we came to where people were dining, and all was bustle and clamour and clatter. Here sate the town paupers all at a dinner of roast-beef; bread in huge pieces was handed about in clothes-baskets; ale was drawn out of big barrels into foaming cans, and thin hands, whose lank wrists seemed lost in the sleeves of their grey woollen jackets, lifted up the welcome can. But poor people and workhouse paupers were not so much to be pitied then as now-a-days. And on that day, apparently, nobody was to be pitied; there was not even a beggar that day in the roads; and had we not given away all our sandwiches and biscuits the day before, we might have kept them for any applicant that we saw this day.

On we went; and now other tables were standing on other greens and in other market-places, and hundreds of women and little children were drinking tea, and ladies and gentlemen, handsomely dressed, were walking about, and the bells were ringing still.

And now we drove into Dunstable in a blaze of light that made us wild with joy; the town was illuminated; the inn to which we drove was like an enchanted palace; every window was a blaze of light; illuminated crowns, and stars, and great G. R.'s covered the front, mingled with laurels and flags; music pealed from the house, and all was bustle and gaiety. Carriages were driving up; carriages were driving away; and we, in our quiet chaise, with our little black leather trunk strapped behind, ran the risk of being quite overlooked.

At length we were in our own room; and then we learnt that the gentlemen of the town had dined there, and there too was to be a grand ball: should

we like to see the rooms—the gentlemen were gone from the dinner, and the company for the ball was only just beginning to come? Of course we must see them! To us it all seemed the grandest thing in the world—the gilded crowns, the laurels, the flags, the lighted chandeliers; the scarlet and the gold; the chalked floor of the dancing-room; the gathering company; the wreaths of flowers: it was all a fairy scene; and we wondered whether ever our mother would take us, like these young ladies brought by their mammas, to a public ball. Ah, we feared not! Our parents, we knew, did not approve of such things.

But we neither moralised much nor troubled ourselves at all that night; we had a late tea, and listened to the music and watched the company arrive for the ball, and never were merrier in all our lives.

The next day we reached London. London! The very name thrilled us but to speak it. But London did not look half as gay as Dunstable had done. The streets of London through which we drove only bore token of the things that had been. The extinguished lamps which had formed crowns and stars, and great G. R.'s, were then dim and unattractive, like the ashes of a fire which has gone out. We could just get an idea of what had been; it was looking at a piece of tapestry on the wrong side.

We only stayed to refresh in London. Our mother promised in the spring to come here, take lodgings and have us with her, and then we should see all the sights. As it was we must now go on.

Our hearts began to flutter and be anxious; the next morning our mother would leave us—we should

be three days' journey from our home and alone, save for each other. Our mother talked cheerfully; pointed out to us this and that by the road-side, but we were very silent.

And now the chaise stopped, and we were at our journey's end. Poor, dear children, my heart at this moment aches for you. I know what you felt. Your hearts were very full, and it was not without reason; sorrow often casts a shade before it as well as leaves one behind.

The mother's kiss is now on their lips; she has now left them, and they are alone among strangers, and a long way from home. But never mind! You stand side by side, holding each other's hand, true friends though young, and true love you will soon find has a balm for many sorrows.

And, thank God! true love and confidence in Him, have been the light and joy and blessing of my whole life.

THE END.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

MR. TEGG

HAS JUST PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING

NEW BOOKS AND NEW EDITIONS,

FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS.

ADAM.—Roman Antiquities; or an Account of the Manners and Customs of the Romans: designed to illustrate the Latin Classics, by explaining Words and Phrases from the Rites and Customs to which they refer. By Alexander Adam, LL.D. A New Edition (the Twelfth), with numerous Notes, improved Indices, and Analytical Questions, by James Boyd, LL.D. 7*s.*, cloth.

ÆSOP.—Æsop's Fables, with upwards of One Hundred and Fifty Engravings. Chiswick. Fcp. Edition. 3*s.*

AINSWORTH.—A new Abridgment of Ainsworth's Dictionary, English and Latin, for the use of Grammar Schools. Into this Edition are introduced several alterations and improvements, for the special purpose of facilitating the labour and increasing the knowledge of the young scholar. By John Dymock, LL.D. Twenty-sixth Edition, 18mo. Price (bound in cloth) 7*s.*

BALDWIN.—A History of Rome, from the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic, with Maps and Plates. By Edward Baldwin. Sixth Edition, bound, 3*s.* 6*d.*

BALDWIN.—The History of Greece, from the Earliest Records of that Country to the time in which it was reduced into a Roman Province. By Edward Baldwin. The Third Edition, for the use of Schools, bound, 4*s.*

BALDWIN.—Fables, Ancient and Modern; adapted for the use of Children. By Edward Baldwin. The Eleventh Edition, bound, 4*s.*

BALDWIN.—The Pantheon: or, Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome; for the use of Schools and Young Persons of both Sexes. By Edward Baldwin. The Eighth Edition, bound, 5*s.* 6*d.*

BARROW.—A Memoir of the Life of Peter the Great. By John Barrow, Esq., of the Admiralty. Cloth, 5*s.*

BONNYCASTLE.—The Scholar's Guide to Arithmetic; with Notes, containing the Proof of each Rule, together with some of the most useful Properties of Numbers. By John Bonnycastle. A New Edition, enlarged and improved. By Rev. E. C. Tyson, M.A. Cloth, 3*s.* 6*d.*

BONNYCASTLE.—A Key to Bonnycastle's Guide to Arithmetic. A New Edition, enlarged and improved. By Rev. E. C. Tyson, M.A. Cloth, 4*s.* 6*d.*

BONNYCASTLE.—An Introduction to Algebra, designed for the use of Schools and other places of Public Education. A New Edition, enlarged and improved. By Rev. E. C. Tyson, M.A. Cloth, 4*s.*

BONNYCASTLE.—A Key to Bonnycastle's Algebra. A New Edition. By Rev. E. C. Tyson, M.A. Cloth, 4*s.* 6*d.*

BONNYCASTLE.—An Introduction to Practical Geometry and Mensuration. A New Edition, revised and improved. By Rev. E. C. Tyson, M.A. Cloth, 5*s.*

BONNYCASTLE.—A Key to Bonnycastle's Mensuration. A New Edition, improved. By Rev. E. C. Tyson, M.A. Cloth, 5*s.*

CRABB.—A Dictionary of General Knowledge; or, an Explanation of Words and Things connected with the Arts and Sciences. Illustrated with 580 Woodcuts. By George Crabb, A.M. Fourth Edition, greatly enlarged. Cloth, 7*s.*

DAVENPORT.—Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language; in which the meaning of every word is clearly explained, and the sound of every syllable distinctly shown, exhibiting the principles of a pure and correct pronunciation. A New Edition, revised and enlarged. By R. A. Davenport. Cloth, 5*s.*

DUNCAN.—A New Hebrew-English and English-Hebrew Lexicon, in Three Parts; to which is appended a New Hebrew Grammar. By Rev. W. W. Duncan, M.A. Cloth, 7*s.*

ELLIS.—A Collection of English Exercises, translated from the writings of Cicero only, for Schoolboys to re-translate into Latin; and adapted to the principal Rules in the Syntax of the Eton, Ruddiman's, and other Grammars, by William Ellis, M.A. A New Edition, corrected and carefully revised. By the Rev. G. N. Wright. Bound, 3*s.* 6*d.*

ENFIELD.—The Speaker; or, Miscellaneous Pieces, selected from the best English Writers, and disposed under proper heads, with a view to facilitate the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking. By William Enfield, LL.D. Bound, 3*s.*

ENFIELD.—The Progressive Spelling Book; or, a New Introduction to Spelling and Reading; arranged in Easy Lessons, and adapted to the capacities of Youth. By William Enfield, M.A. Bound, 1*s.* 3*d.*

EUCLID.—The Elements of Euclid, viz., the first Fourteen Books, together with the Eleventh and Twelfth, printed with a few variations and improvements. From the text of Dr. Simson. A New Edition, corrected and revised by William Rutherford, F.R.A.S. 5*s.*

FINDLAY.—A Modern Atlas: forming a Complete Compendium of Geography; exhibiting, in Thirty Maps, the Extent, Divisions, Physical and Political Arrangements of every Country in the known World; and containing the Latest Discoveries in the Polar Regions, Africa, Polynesia, &c.; with an Introduction, explaining the Construction and Use of Maps, and a Copious Index for Reference to the Maps, showing the Latitude and Longitude of every place contained in the Atlas. By Alexander G. Findlay. Royal 8vo.; for the use of Schools and Young Persons. Half-bound, 12*s.*

FINDLAY.—A Collection of Thirty Outline Maps for Geographical Exercises, adapted to facilitate the Study of Geography, and intended as practical Lessons for Pupils to fill up. By Alexander G. Findlay. Imperial 4to. 5*s.*

GARTLEY.—Murray's Grammar and Exercises Abridged, comprising the substance of his large Grammar and Exercises, with additional Notes and Illustrations. By G. Gartley, Teacher of English Grammar, &c., Glasgow. 2*s.*

GOLDSMITH.—A Grammar of Geography for the use of Schools, with Maps and Illustrations. By the Rev. J. Goldsmith. A New Edition, revised and enlarged by the Rev. G. N. Wright, M.A. 3*s.* 6*d.*

GRIESBACH.—Novum Testamentum Græce, ex Editione Griesbachii emendante, Henrico A. Aitton. Glasguæ. 5*s.*

HUTTON.—A Course of Mathematics, composed for the use of the Royal Military Academy. By Charles Hutton, LL.D., F.R.S. A New and carefully corrected Edition, entirely remodelled and adapted to the course of Instruction now pursued in the Royal Military Academy, by W. Rutherford, F.R.A.S. 8vo. Bound, 16*s.*

HUTTON.—Recreations in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, translated from Montucla's Edition of Ozanam. By Charles Hutton, LL.D., F.R.S. A New and revised Edition, with numerous Additions, and illustrated with upwards of 400 Cuts. By Edward Riddle, Master of the Mathematical School, Royal Hospital, Greenwich. 16*s.*

JOHNSON.—An English Dictionary in miniature, with the Addition of several Thousand Words, and the Pronunciation in the manner of Walker, adapted for the use of Schools. 18mo, 1*s.* 6*d.*

JOYCE.—A System of Practical Arithmetic, applicable to the present State of Trade and Money Transactions, illustrated by numerous examples under each Rule, for the use of Schools. By the Rev. J. Joyce. A New Edition, revised, corrected, and enlarged, by Francis Potter. Bound. 3*s.*

KEITH.—A New Treatise on the Use of the Globes, or a Philosophical View of the Earth and Heavens, designed for the use of Schools and Young Persons. By Thomas Keith. A New Edition, enlarged and improved, by the Rev. G. N. Wright. Bound. 6*s.*6*d.*

LEMPRIERE.—Bibliotheca Classica, or a Classical Dictionary; containing a copious Account of all the Proper Names mentioned in Ancient Authors. By J. Lempriere, D.D. A New Edition, revised and corrected, with numerous additions and improvements, by William Park, M.A. 7*s.*

MADAN.—Juvenal and Persius, Literally Translated; with copious explanatory Notes, by which these difficult satirists are rendered easy and familiar to the reader. By the Rev. M. Madan. A New Edition, revised and corrected. 2 vols. 8vo. 14*s.*

MANGNALL.—Historical and Miscellaneous Questions for the use of Young People, with a Selection of British and General Biography, &c. By Richmal Mangnall. A New Edition, corrected and enlarged, and continued to the present time by the Rev. G. N. Wright, M.A. 4*s.* 6*d.*

MAVOR.—The English Spelling Book, accompanied by a progressive Series of Easy and Familiar Lessons, intended as an Introduction to the Reading and Spelling of the English Language. By William Mavor, LL.D. *Tegg's New and Improved Edition.* 1*s.* 3*d.*

Bradbury & Evans, Printers, Whitefriars.

A LIST

OF

MARY HOWITT'S JUVENILE BOOKS,

ENTITLED

Tales for the People and their Children.

Each Work sold separately, neatly bound and gilt, at 2s. 6d.

1. STRIVE AND THRIVE.
2. SOWING AND REAPING.
3. LITTLE COIN MUCH CARE.
4. HOPE ON HOPE EVER.
5. WHO SHALL BE GREATEST.
6. WORK AND WAGES.
7. ALICE FRANKLIN.
8. NO SENSE LIKE COMMON SENSE.
9. LOVE AND MONEY.
10. WHICH IS THE WISER?
11. MY UNCLE THE CLOCK MAKER.
12. THE TWO APPRENTICES.
13. MY OWN STORY; OR THE AUTO-BIOGRAPHY OF A CHILD.

Barbauld's Evenings at Home, *4s.*
Breakfast-Table Science, Wright's, *2s. 6d.*
Poplar Grove, Copley's, *2s. 6d.*
Tom Telescope's Newtonian Philosophy, *4s. 6d.*
Looking-Glass for the Mind, Cuts, *2s. 6d.*
Girl's Own Book, 13th Edit., sq., *4s. 6d.*
Child's Own Book, Cuts, *7s. 6d.*
Tegg's Present for an Apprentice, *4s. 6d.*

PETER PARLEY'S TALES ABOUT EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA, AND AMERICA, *7s. 6d.*

The Sea and Pacific Ocean, *4s. 6d.*
The Sun, Moon, and Stars, *4s. 6d.*
England, Ireland, and Scotland, *7s. 6d.*
Ancient and Modern Greece, *4s. 6d.*
Christmas and its Festivals, *7s. 6d.*
Animals, Cuts, *7s. 6d.*
The United States of America, *4s. 6d.*
Rome and Modern Italy, *4s. 6d.*
Mythology of Greece and Rome, *4s. 6d.*
Plants, edited by Mrs. Loudon, *7s. 6d.*
Universal History, *4s. 6d.*
Sergeant Bell and his Raree Show, Cuts, square, *7s. 6d.*

Aikin's Calendar of Nature, *2s. 6d.*
Boy's Book of Science. 16mo, *7s. 6d.*
Brewster's Natural Magic, *5s.*
Copley's (Esther) Early Friendships, a Tale, *2s. 6d.*
Early Impressions, by a Lady, *1s. 6d.*
Edgeworth's Rosamond, 2 vols. 18mo. cloth, *5s.*
Endless Amusements, 18mo. *2s.*
Janeway's Token for Children, 32mo. *6d.*
Juvenile Scrap-Book, Tales, &c. *4s.*
Juvenile Every-Day Book, *2s. 6d.*
Love Token for Children, by Miss Sedgwick, *2s.*
Mother's Story Book, by Mrs. Child, 18mo. *3s. 6d.*
Peter Parley's Grammar of Geography, *4s. 6d.*
Peter Parley's Lives of Franklin and Washington, *4s. 6d.*
Rich Poor Man and Poor Rich Man, by Miss Sedgwick, *2s.*
Stories about Poland, *2s. 6d.*
Village and the Vicarage, *2s. 6d.*
Watts's Divine Songs, *6d.*
Watts's Divine Songs; with Essay, by Scott, *6d.*
White's Natural History of Selborne, by Lady Dover, *3s. 6d.*
Young Man's Aid to Knowledge, 24mo., *2s. 6d.*
Young Ladies' Story-Teller, by Miss Leslie, *2s.*

London: Printed for T. Tegg, 73, Cheapside.